

Your Korean Skin Care Routine

From double cleansing and essences to the fabled 10-step routine, we're here to demystify K-beauty (or Korean beauty), as well as help you create your own personalized routine, for beautiful, hydrated skin that thrives.

What is K-Beauty?

Korean women (and some men, too) view skincare as something to savor and enjoy. It's not about having the most amount of serums and creams, but rather about having the right products that deliver what your skin needs in the right order.

What is the 10-Step Korean Skin Care Routine?

Are 10 steps really necessary? Nope!

The 10 steps are all the ways you can incorporate good skin care into your routine, and you can pare it down to 5 steps, do all 10, or add more. It's all about getting to know your skin, figuring out what it needs, and tailoring your skin care to suit those needs.

How does it work?

Korean skin care steps are all about layering. The general idea is that after cleansing, you want to go with the lightest formula to the thickest. Why? You want to give thinner-consistency or water-based products a chance to penetrate the skin. Putting a heavier cream first, which may contain waxes, may not allow those lighter formulas to get through.

And while you don't have to do all 10 steps, you do need to make sure that your routine covers these three important functions:

1. Cleanse (twice to be thorough)
2. Target skin care concerns (dryness, wrinkles, redness, acne, etc)
3. Protect (SPF for morning routines)

Your Sample Korean Skin Care Routine

Adaptable to day or night, here's a 10-step skincare routine (plus some optional add-ons!) to help you on your way to getting your best skin yet. We at Kiehl's include the finest naturally-derived ingredients in all our innovative formulas, so while the products recommended here will promote hydrated, healthy skin, feel free to pick your own skincare faves to create a custom routine.

OIL CLEANSER

What it does: Kickstart your routine by gently removing makeup, sunscreen, and other impurities from the skin. Cleansing oils usually contain an oil base, as well as a traditional skin-cleansing ingredients, that binds to dirt and excess oil on the skin without stripping its natural barrier. And yes, oily skin gals can benefit from this too!

We recommend: Midnight Recovery Botanical Cleansing Oil

This gentle and effective formula transforms into a cleansing milk as it emulsifies with water. Made with Lavender Essential Oil, it soothes skin and imparts a wonderful calming aroma as you prepare for your nighttime routine.

[AG NOTE: Article will have images, but to save space I only included this as an example]



FOAM CLEANSER

What it does: Using a second cleanser ensures that any leftover dirt, sweat, and impurities are gently removed. This double-cleansing step goes deeper into your pores and ensures any treatment that follows gets properly absorbed into the skin.

We recommend: Ultra Facial Cleanser

Formulated with Squalane, Apricot Kernel Oil, and Vitamin E, this foaming cleanser continues to be a customer favorite time and time again thanks to its gentle, non-drying formula.

TONER

What it does: This isn't your typical alcohol astringent--Korean skincare is all about adding moisture back in. Immediately applying toner after cleansing ensures your skin reaches its optimal pH, prevents dehydration, and prepares your skin for your actives-infused serums.

We recommend: Calendula Herbal Extract Alcohol-Free Toner

Another customer favorite, this alcohol-free toner refreshes, soothes, and improves the feel of skin thanks to Calendula, Burdock Root Extract, and Allantoin.

ESSENCE

What it does: A lightweight, concentrated formula that's a hybrid between a toner and a serum. It contains active ingredients that target dullness and signs of aging while encouraging healthy skin turnover.

We recommend: Iris Extract Activating Treatment Essence

A truly multi-purpose product, our Essence contains Lip Hydroxy Acid and Sodium Hyaluronate to improve the appearance of dullness and fine lines over time, all while prepping the skin for the next anti-aging step in your routine.

SERUM

What it does: If your concerns include wrinkles, redness, acne, dehydration, rough texture, or large pores, this is the step worth investing in. Serums are concentrated formulations of the active ingredient(s) that tackle skin concerns at their core.

We recommend: Powerful-Strength Vitamin C Serum

A skincare super ingredient, Vitamin C is a highly effective antioxidant known to improve signs of aging, while boosting radiance and minimizing pores. It also penetrates deeply into the skin and remains effective in the skin for up to 6 days.

MASK (optional)

What it does: If your skin needs a little more TLC, a mask can help turn the tide against a potential breakout or dullness. Enriched with skin soothing ingredients, another great thing about a mask is you can leave it on while you relax (or tend to errands).

We recommend: Avocado Nourishing Hydrating Mask

Fragrance-free and formulated with avocado fruit extract and avocado oil for optimal moisture and softness, this rich, velvety mask helps seal in moisture for happy, replenished skin.

EYE CREAM

What it does: Skin around the eyes is at its thinnest and also doesn't contain any sebaceous glands to produce natural oils, so it's important to hydrate and protect this area.

We recommend: Midnight Recovery Eye

Help diminish the look of dark circles and puffiness while you sleep thanks to nourishing ingredients like Butcher's Broom Extract, Lavender Essential Oil, and Squalane.

MOISTURIZER

What it does: A quality moisturizer balances your complexion, heightens your glow, and keeps skin comfortable all day.

We recommend: Ultra Facial Cream

Great for all skin types, our #1 facial cream provides lasting 24-hour hydration, even in skin's driest areas.

LIP BALM

What it does: If you're the type that battles dry, chapped lips all-year round, a soothing and healing lip balm will keep that dehydration at bay.

We recommend: Lip Balm #1

Thanks to nourishing ingredients like Squalane, Aloe Vera, and Vitamin E, chapped lips don't stand a chance.

SPF

What it does: Sun protection shouldn't just be limited to beachside vacations! Year-round suncare--yes, even during winter--is critical for protecting skin against harmful UVA and UVB rays that cause premature aging, discoloration, and dark spots.

We recommend: Super Fluid Daily UV Defense SPF 50+

Dermatologist-tested for safety, our non-comedogenic, lightweight formula includes advanced UVA/UVB technology and pollution protection that works for all skin types.

Optional Add-Ons

EXFOLIATOR

What it does: If your skin is feeling extra dull, adding an exfoliator before cleansing can help remove excess oil and sweep away dead skin cells.

We recommend: Epidermal Re-Texturizing Micro-Dermabrasion

Experience an immediate skin-smoothing effect with our polishing cream, formulated with Micronized Shells (Diatomaceous Earth), a natural exfoliant that gets rid of dead skin cells on the outer layer of skin.

OVERNIGHT MASK

What it does: If your skin feels like it's craving for more hydration than usual, skip your nighttime moisturizer and apply an overnight mask instead.

We recommend: Ultra Facial Overnight Hydrating Mask

Antarcticine, Fountain Plant, and Imperata Cylindrica work together to intensely moisturize, smooth, and soften skin while you sleep.