



Dr. Margaret  
Sommerville

ERICK GIBSON

## Smooth Operator

How a Chevy Chase dermatologist treats the skin she's in **By Leah Ariniello**

**You know you're** doing something right when you get carded at a restaurant despite being well past 21. For Dr. Margaret Sommerville, that something involves taking meticulous care of her skin.

The Chevy Chase dermatologist prefers to keep her age private unless you're the waiter requesting her ID, but she admits to being in her 40s, a time when wrinkles start to etch most faces. Sommerville's skin, however, is smooth and dewy even up close. New patients, she says, often comment on her youthful glow, noting that her skin actually looks better in person than on her website.

The Bethesda resident, who has been treating medical and cosmetic skin issues since 1996, so far has avoided nips and tucks. Probably the most invasive procedure she undergoes is a twice-yearly shot of muscle-relaxing Botox between the brows to smooth out a frown line. Instead, Sommerville follows a regimen that focuses on topical products, with one of her favorites being Retin-A, a prescription-strength retinoid.

### Her daily drill

Sommerville has dry, sensitive, acne-prone skin, so she avoids products that contain fragrance or mineral oil, both of which can irritate skin and clog pores. In the morning, she washes her face with warm water and **Chamomile Facial Cleanser**, which is one of her private-label skin care products made by CosMedical Technologies Inc. Then she applies a moisturizer and eye cream containing antioxidants, such as **Clinique Medical's Optimizing Treatment Cream** or the serum **Vita Soothe**, another private-label skin care product made by CosMedical Technologies Inc. and sold in her office, and **iS Clinical's Eye Complex**. "Antioxidants will scavenge the free oxygen radicals that cause aging of the skin," Sommerville says.

Next she applies sunscreen. In the winter, she often applies **La Roche-Posay's Anthelios 60** for sun protection and tops it with **Lucidity Light-Diffusing Make-up**, a light foundation by Estée Lauder. In the summer, she generally skips foundation and uses a tinted moisturizer, **Intelli-shade**, which has an SPF of 45 and ray-deflecting zinc oxide as well as antioxidants.

### Her nighttime ritual

Before bed, Sommerville follows a similar routine, minus the sunscreen and make-up. And every other night she applies **Retin-A**. "I've been on Retin-A since forever, since med school," she says.

Retinoids are chemically related to Vitamin A and come in prescription-strength versions, including Retin-A, which Sommerville considers best for anyone over 30. She says less potent, over-the-counter formulations containing retinol are fine for those in their 20s. She credits the retinoid with minimizing acne, sun spots, roughness and fine lines, and with giving her skin its youthful, even appearance. It boosts the skin's collagen, which breaks down with age (and plummets after menopause). "It has so many good benefits that have been proven beyond a reasonable doubt," she says.

Sommerville is always looking for better products and occasionally changes

brands and tweaks her daily routine, but Retin-A and sunscreen have been constants since about her late 20s.

### Here comes the sun

A dark-eyed Scarlett O'Hara lookalike, Sommerville says, "My dream would be to return to parasols." Until that time, though, she relies on hats for sun protection, particularly the large-brimmed Helen Kaminski ones that offer lots of shade. She's also vigilant about sunscreen, preferring SPFs of at least 30 for the face and at least 50 for the body. Given the sun's association with skin cancer and wrinkles, "I don't know any dermatologist who's tan," she says.

At the beach, she'll seek shade under an umbrella, wear a sarong and throw a towel over her back. She also will re-apply sunscreen, such as **La Roche-Posay's Anthelios 60 Melt-In Sunscreen Milk**, every two hours. "You are supposed to apply at least a teaspoon of sunscreen to the face and one ounce or two tablespoons of sunscreen to your body every two hours when outdoors," Sommerville says, "meaning your average container would be empty by the end of the day."

### Going beyond facials

When you're over 40, regular facials just don't cut it, Sommerville says. So every month she undergoes a **light chemical peel with glycolic acid or microdermabrasion**, where a special device gently polishes the skin. Both procedures help slough off old cells and boost cell turnover, which Sommerville says slows significantly after age 30. "The skin looks brighter after," she says.

Within the next couple of years, Sommerville plans to step up her regimen by smoothing out smile lines with the injectable wrinkle filler **Juvéderm**. "I think aging needs to be embraced," she says, "but why not embrace it putting your best face forward?" ■

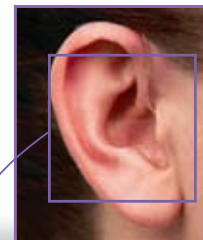
*Leah Ariniello is a Bethesda-based writer who frequently writes about health issues. If you'd like to suggest future subjects for this column, e-mail [editorial@bethesda.com](mailto:editorial@bethesda.com).*

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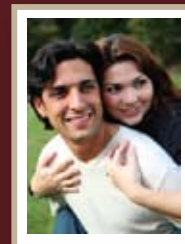
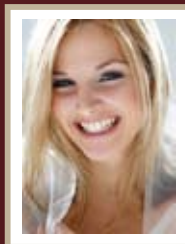


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