

## *month-by-month* beauty countdown

*To look as fabulous as you'll feel walking down the aisle, you'll want to start taking care of yourself now. Here, an easy regime.*



THERE IS A SELECT GROUP of adjectives that people often attach to the word *bride*: blushing, beautiful, radiant. But in the months leading up to a wedding, many brides-to-be relate to terms of a different sort: tired, stressed, and haggard. Amid the bustle of planning, it's hard to imagine that fabled "glow" arriving in time for your walk down the aisle. Don't worry. Whether you have several months or a couple of weeks, there are things you can do now to ensure you'll look your best, and some you can leave until the eleventh hour. Follow our tips, and continue to do the one thing that makes you naturally gorgeous: smile.

### *6 months before*

**hire a hairstylist** Audition stylists until you find one you love; ask friends and fellow brides for recommendations. Once you select someone, he or she can help you come up with a wedding-day hairstyle. Now's the time to try something new, like highlights, and book your appointment for your wedding day.

**schedule a makeup artist** Some hairstylists also do makeup and offer packages. If yours does not, ask if she knows someone, talk to other brides, or inquire at your favorite cosmetics counter or salon. Prices for makeup are similar to those for hairstyling: \$75 to \$300, and in-salon application costs less than on-location. Request references and ask to see photos of recent work.

**clear your skin** Blemishes you've tolerated—acne, scars, sun damage—can be diminished through treatments like retinol cream, lasers, and skin lighteners, if you begin a regimen now. To improve your complexion, consider monthly facials and treatments like fruit-acid peels, which refresh skin's outer layer. Microdermabrasion, a form of exfoliation that uses tiny crystals, is better for sensitive skin. Prices for both range from \$100 to \$200 per session.

### 3 months before

**target areas** If your gown bares your shoulders, arms, or décolletage, do two sets of ten to twelve push-ups every other day to define these areas, says Christi Masi, a personal trainer and the author of *The Healthy Bride Guide* (Sasquatch, 2006).

**shape your brows** Visit a specialist, especially if you want to reshape your brows, says Shobha Tummala, founder of Shobha spa in New York. Overplucked brows will need time to grow in. Try threading (hairs are wrapped with thread and pulled), or find an esthetician who pairs waxing with tweezing to shape brows better. Go for follow-ups every three weeks.

### 1 month before

**brighten your smile** First, get a teeth cleaning, even if you're not due for one. Drugstore whiteners, like strips and gels, take about three weeks to work. A one-hour whitening by a dentist starts at about \$650, but it fades stains significantly, says New York dentist Mal Braverman. Results can last six months to a year.

**hold a beauty rehearsal** See your hairstylist and makeup artist for trial runs, with your veil and accessories, says New York salon owner Eva Scrivo. Take photos so you can recreate the look on your wedding day.

**get golden** Sunless options include airbrushing (color is applied by an esthetician, \$50 to \$100) or spray tanning, where tanner is misted on via jets (\$25 to \$35). If it's your first time, try it out a month before the wedding.

### 2 weeks before

**cut and color** Cut your hair two weeks ahead so it won't look too blunt, says hairstylist and makeup artist Ann Marie Laurendeau of Anemone Makeup in Winchester, Massachusetts. Have color touched up now as well to give it time to settle in.

### the week of

**smooth skin** Make an appointment to have your eyebrows shaped and other areas, like bikini line and legs, waxed. This way, there's enough time for any redness to fade.

**pack an emergency kit** Fill a bag with supplies: tissues, nail file, dental floss, breath mints, and bobby pins. Ask your makeup artist for pressed powder, lipstick, and concealer to put in a custom makeup palette. Also bring your nail polish for quick fixes.

**go for your last appointments** Some people experience acne after a facial, particularly if they have never had one before. New York dermatologist Rosemarie Ingleton recommends getting this service at least a week before, in case you develop an allergic rash or look red. Tan two days ahead of the wedding for the best color, says Richie Perna, co-owner of Bond St. Tanning in New York. Results last about a week if you thoroughly exfoliate before application.

### the day before

**banish blemishes** Adrenaline can lead to breakouts. If this happens, don't panic: Your dermatologist can administer a cortisone injection to begin reducing a pimple's swelling and redness. "Almost all my brides have an appointment the day before their wedding," says Ingleton. Within twenty-four hours, the blemish will have almost disappeared.

**put on polish** Dzeneta Arslanovic, director of the Spa at Miami's the Shore Club, advises brides to get a manicure and pedicure a day ahead so nails can thoroughly dry. Should you nick or smudge a nail, gently even out the area with a buffer and smooth on a dot of color.

**wash your hair** "The buildup of oils overnight makes hair easier to work with the next day," says Scrivo. Use light conditioner and styling products. Fine or oily hair should be washed and styled the day of to keep it from falling flat.

### the day of

**just relax** The more at ease your mind and body are, the better you'll look. Stress can show up on your skin in the form of acne or eczema. To help stay calm, take slow, deep breaths, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth.

**pace yourself** Allow ample time for hair and makeup: Three hours before is when many brides begin their hair, followed by makeup, with each taking around an hour. Pull on your dress only after hair, makeup, and perfume are set (oils in fragrance can discolor your dress). Lastly, arrange hair accessories and veil.