

How to keep your aging skin in bloom

I remember when I turned 30, more than two decades ago (gulp), I was so traumatized that I spent half my rent at a high-end makeup counter buying wrinkle cream. While my roommate wasn't impressed, I was sure it was the beginning of the end.

It wasn't. Looking back though, the fear of the aging unknown has kept me, for the most part, diligent about proper skin care, even though I, on an occasional late night, have gone to bed in full makeup.

As we creep toward senordom, our skin doesn't slough itself as easily as it did in our youth. This can make lines look more pronounced and give an uneven, scaly appearance. There are too many exfoliating products on the market to mention, but I have found that all you really need is a nice, rough washcloth. They are inexpensive and do the trick.

Scrubs are another good choice. They can be pricy, but you can actually make your own scrub by putting a little bit of granulated sugar in your cleanser and rubbing carefully over your face with the tips of your ring and middle fingers, which are weaker than the others. This technique will automatically help you use a lighter touch, which is critical. No tugging and stretching the skin.

Some people recommend making a scrub from salt, but I have been told by beauty experts that it can be drying, an already common problem for us as we age, according to the National Institute on Aging.

As winter approaches, the lower legs, elbows and forearms may start feeling rough and scaly, too. Put your sugar scrub to work on these areas as well. Just mix with your shower gel. You might be tempted to mix with oil, but if you do, be very careful. Oil will make the tub and floor very slippery, and it is more difficult to rinse off.

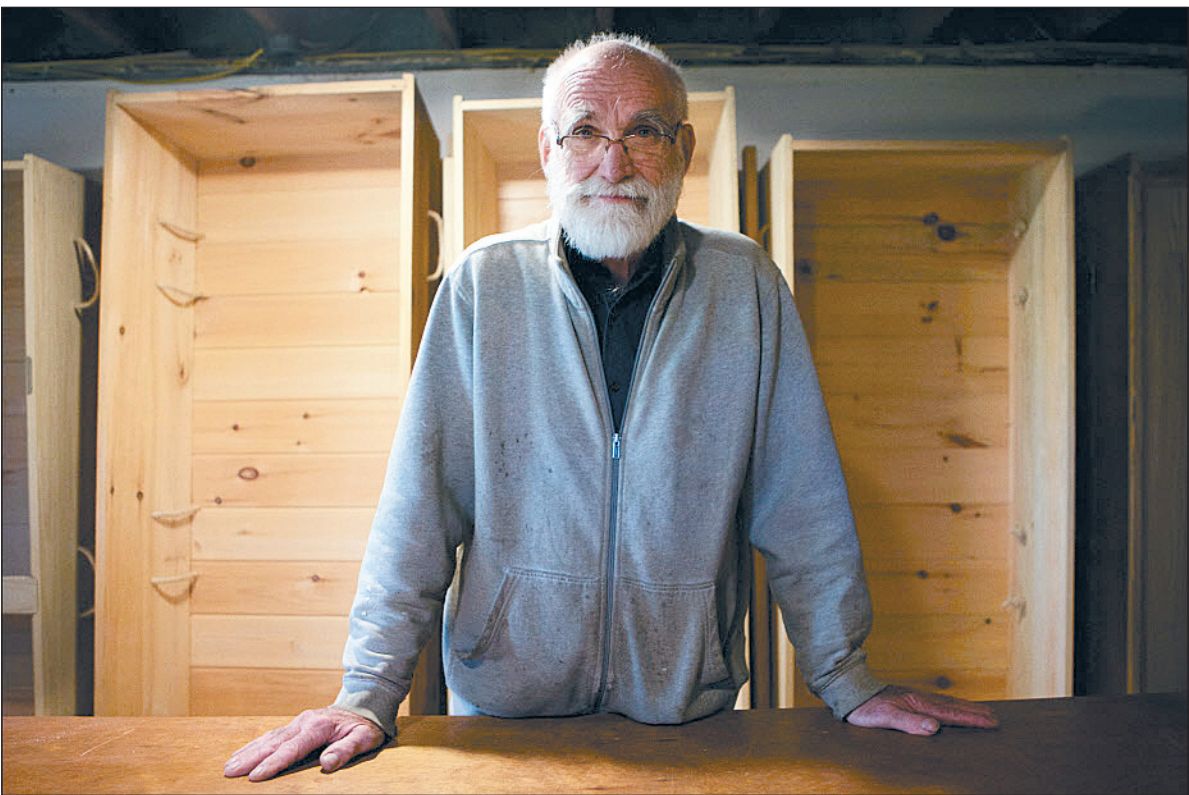
Some reasons for dry skin include dehydration, too much sun exposure, being in very dry air, smoking and stress. And those hot showers after working out? Not a good idea. We have to preserve what natural oils we have left.

Remember, being comfortable in the skin you're in is easier when it is soft and supple, not dry and itchy.

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CAROL HIGGINS TAYLOR



TROY R. BENNETT | BDN

Chuck Lakin (above) of Waterville stands in his basement with a selection of wooden coffins he made on site. Lakin, a retired reference librarian, also teaches others how to build their own coffins and lectures about "natural burials." Lakin (top left) uses an iron and wet rag to show how to use steam and kerfs to bend wood for the sides of a simple "toe pincher" coffin. Lakin (top right) demonstrates how to build a simple "toe pincher" coffin.

Think outside the box

Baby boomers demand 'green' options, even in death

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

When it comes to death and burial, coffin-maker Chuck Lakin of Waterville wants you to think outside the box.

Or in a box, if you prefer. "You can be buried in a cardboard box, a shroud, your favorite sweatpants or nothing at all," Lakin says. "You'd be surprised at how few rules there are."

Watch the video
bangordailynews.com

Lakin is well known for his do-it-yourself coffin-building demonstrations at the Common Ground Country Fair, where he also speaks about the practices of "natural burial." He also travels throughout the state speaking, at no charge, to groups at libraries, adult education classes, senior centers, health care facilities and other venues. Many of the ideas he shares with his audiences can be found on his website, Last Things.

For example, in Maine:
— It is legal to care for your own dead in your own home.
— It is legal to bury a family member's body on your own land, subject to state regulations and local ordinances.
— You do not have to buy a cas-

ket from the funeral home that serves you.

— You do not have to be embalmed.

— A vault or grave liner is not required by law, though some cemeteries do require one.

Lakin, who is 70 and retired from his career as a reference librarian at Colby College, gives 30 or 40 presentations per year and the demand keeps rising. He thinks that's largely because of the aging of the baby boom generation and a growing interest in reclaiming death as a natural transition and an integral part of the human experience.

"Ninety percent of people die expected deaths," he said, and yet families often feel distressingly removed from the process. Last Things, the organization he co-founded in 2008, provides resources and support for connecting more personally with death, from caring for a dying loved one at home or participating more closely in institutional care to washing and tending the body after death to burial in a manner that confers intimacy, dignity and meaning on the occasion.

The organization also provides information about options such as whole-body donation, burial at sea, flame cremation and alkaline hydrolysis, also known as "green cremation" — a relatively new process that dissolves soft tissue

and leaves only bone to be pulverized for spreading, storage or burial. The water-based process uses a fraction of the energy required for flame cremation and releases no chemical pollutants into the environment.

Regardless of the options people choose, Lakin encourages them to plan ahead.

"One reason people feel that death is so tragic is that they're usually so unprepared when it happens," Lakin said. "They end up running around and making arrangements at the last minute. But if it's planned ahead of time, the situation is more calm and there is more opportunity to honor the death as a spiritual occasion."

Lakin's interest in natural death and burial practices grows out of personal experience.

"My father died of metastatic lung cancer in 1979," he said. "He was home in his own bed for the last six weeks, with his wife and kids surrounding him and touching him, right up until he died. It was all very natural."

That changed when someone called the local funeral director.

"He did exactly what was expected of him," Lakin recalled. "He arrived promptly, zipped my father into a body bag, drove him away and four days later we had the funeral."

He paused. "I hated that."
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Is chiropractic care safe for seniors?

We are all familiar with the image of a doctor "cracking" a patient's spine. There is an audible pop when the joint releases, and there is often an immediate improvement in the patient's pain and mobility.

Many patients are understandably nervous about this treatment, especially when they have arthritis, osteoporosis, or a history of spinal injury or surgery.

While this type of treatment — called manual manipulation, because it is done by hand — may be scary to watch, it is actually very safe. But it also is not the only style of manipulation doctors of chiropractic are trained in.

The key part of the manipulation is the quick, shallow thrust. But the treatment does not have to be done by hand.

Another type of manipulation uses special tables that have built in "drop" sections. These sections can be raised about an inch under

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MICHAEL NOONAN

New law empowers home caregivers

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

Families and caregivers, including adult children and the aging parents they care for, will benefit from a new Maine law that took effect Oct. 15. The CARE Act — formally titled the Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable Act — requires hospitals to work with a designated caregiver before discharging a patient back home. The law is part of a national initiative supported by the senior advocacy organization AARP to enable aging Americans to thrive in their own homes and communities.

In effect, the CARE Act encourages patients, especially the frail elderly, to name a caregiver to help with their follow-up care after discharge. It requires hospitals to ask patients — or their legal guardians — at admission if they already have such a caregiver or want to name one. If

they do, the name becomes part of the patient record and the hospital notifies the caregiver when the patient is expected to be discharged. Before discharge, the caregiver receives detailed information and hands-on instruction about the patient's discharge orders, including medications, dressing changes, diet, activity and follow-up appointments.

The primary goal, said bill sponsor Drew Gattine, D-Westbrook, is to help keep all patients safe and well in their homes and communities and to reduce hospital readmissions. While some elderly Mainers are supported by professional home-based caregiver services, Gattine said that "there is also a huge network of friends, family members and neighbors who help folks get by in the community."

Many informal caregivers play a part in keeping patients well, he said, but too often lack access to



BDN FILE

Rep. Drew Gattine, D-Westbrook.

critical information from the hospital.

Hospitals agree with the goals of the new law, said Maine Hospital Association spokesman Jeff Austin, and have the additional incentive of new Medicare rules that monitor readmission rates.

"Hospitals love having competent, available caregivers at home to finish the care people need to keep from returning to the hospital," Austin said. But, he added, the Maine Hospital Association

Saying goodbye is another step forward

Last week, I sold my house in Orono. I lived there from 1997 through 2012, and it had been on the market since April. Signing the papers at the closing and then driving away, it was a huge relief, especially knowing it's in good hands for the future.

The handoff was made sweeter by the fact that the new owners, a young couple with two small children, know and love the neighborhood; her parents have lived just across the street since before my family moved in. They won't be surprised to learn that the neighborhood is a lively mix of University of Maine student housing and single-family homes or that a slow-moving train rumbles along the back property line from time to time, both issues I fretted over when thinking about selling to someone from outside the area.

So this transition is good for the house, good for the new family and very good for the neighborhood. And it's good for me, too, to trust in the happy new direction my life is taking and move forward unencumbered. Letting go of that house marks an important milestone I needed to pass.

Still, I found myself getting teary in the car on the way home to Stockton Springs and the life I now share, so gratefully, with Douglas. The house on Hillside Road was where I lived through some of the most intense changes in my life — some very positive as well as some very difficult.

This is the home where my family celebrated birthdays and holidays, graduations and job promotions. It's where I transitioned from a good career in nursing into a much better career in journalism. It's where my sons navigated their coming-of-age years, graduated from high school and launched into their adult lives. It's where my marriage finally fell apart, and it's where I sheltered in the aftermath of the divorce. It's also where my sons and I grieved, with the loving support of our friends and neighbors, when their father died.

We packed a lot of living into this pretty house, and it doesn't surprise me to feel a little melancholy at saying goodbye to it. But it's just a house, after all. Driving home after the closing, I realized that the memories — happy, sad and otherwise — have already left the building and are right where they belong, in my heart. I can tap them any time I want, turn them over in my mind and consider how their meaning changes with the passage of years. Some I will let fly away, glad to see them go. Others I will hold, close and dear, forever.

The yellow house with the gingerbread trim is truly empty, open, ready and waiting to welcome a new family and all the life they will bring through its doors. I wish them every happiness.



MEG HASKELL