

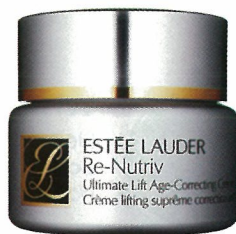
The Firm

It was bound to happen—her once-youthful skin was starting to slump. Determined to stop the clock, antiaging virgin Ariel Leve signs up for a complexion pick-me-up



Nearly a decade has passed since a dermatologist advised me to wash my face with Cetaphil cleanser because it was good for my dry skin. Turns out my fanatical devotion to this drugstore staple is one of the longest and most successful relationships I've ever had. It is also a stubborn (albeit cost-efficient) reminder of how resistant I am to change.

In spite of the passing years, or maybe because of them, skincare is the one area of my life that has remained unequivocally low-maintenance. I wash my face and use a moisturizer with SPF. That's it. Naturally, I've seen some changes when I look in the mirror. But whenever I spot them, I do what any self-respecting woman in denial would do: I remove the lightbulb in the bathroom and replace it with a lower wattage.



MC RECOMMENDS:
 Dr. Brandt Time Arrest Crème de Luxe, \$200;
 RéVive Serum Pressé, \$295; Estée Lauder Re-Nutriv Ultimate Lift Age-Correcting Crème, \$250.



I'm not sure when exactly it happened, but one day it hit me: Those lines that I see on my face aren't going to go away. In fact, they're going to get deeper and more noticeable. And when I wake up in the mornings, the tic-tac-toe creases from my pillow take longer to disappear. I assumed it must be the linen. Then it occurred to me—it wasn't the quality of the sheets, it was the quality of my skin! Suddenly, a whole new world opened up. A world filled with words like *firming* and *sagging*, *peptides* and *serums*. And worst of them all—*jowly*. No woman should ever have to share a description used for an English bulldog.

It was impossible to avoid the truth. Every time I'd see Andie MacDowell in a commercial, I'd instinctively pay attention. I shunned the magnifying mirrors in hotel bathrooms—having >>