SKIN AS A MARKER OF HEALTH AND BEAUTY

We're all attracted to a beautiful face. We like to look at them, we feel drawn to them, and we aspire to have one. Many researchers and others have investigated what we humans identify as "beautiful": symmetry, large evenly spaced eyes, white teeth, a well-proportioned nose and of course, a flawless complexion. The skin is of utmost importance when people judge someone as beautiful.

When choosing a mate, men rank female beauty more highly than women rate male appearance. Female beauty is thought to signal youth, fertility and health.

Beauty can also signal high status. People with "plain looks" earn about 10% less than people who are average-looking, who in turn earn around 5% less than people who are good-looking.

Even the best facial structure can be unbalanced by skin that is flawed.

There are many skin conditions that are perfectly natural, yet because of our beliefs around skin and health, these can cause the sufferers extreme self-consciousness.

Chloasma (pigmentation) often affects pregnant women. (from www.shutterstock.com)

Examples include:

- Chloasma, the facial pigmentation that often occurs during pregnancy
- Starburst telangiectasias, the broken capillaries that appear on the lower thighs and calves of many women as they age
- Dermatosis papulosa nigra, the brown marks that accumulate on the cheeks and temples, especially on people of Asian or African descent.
- Teenagers with acne are more likely to withdraw socially. It may impair school performance and result in severe depression and even suicide.
- There are hundreds of skin diseases that can change facial appearance, including rashes such as rosacea and skin cancers. Surgery for skin cancer can leave noticeable marks and scars that make the survivor self-conscious.
- Perhaps alongside the greying of the hair, skin is the most visible sign of ageing. As we age the skin changes. These changes are most pronounced in the areas exposed daily to the sun, such as the face, neck and the backs of our hands.
- There the skin thins, loses volume and elasticity and becomes dull. Dark rings develop under the eyes. Wrinkles appear. The skin sags and blemishes and scars accumulate.

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