

How Your Period Plays With Your Looks

Ever feel like you look inexplicably blah one week, then notice that guys can't take their eyes off you the next? Well, you can both blame and thank your hormones. Their rise and fall seriously impact the sexy status of your hair, skin, body, and even scent. (The exception: If you're on birth-control pills, you don't ovulate, so you don't experience the same peaks and valleys.) But that doesn't mean you have to be a slave to your cycle. Our week-by-week game plan will keep you super sultry all month long.

BY ALYSSA KOLSKY HERTZIG
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEAN ISIDRO

PMS Time



WHAT'S HAPPENING: In addition to those hard-core cravings (chips! chocolate! cheese!), you are likely sporting a few new zits (or at least have a face in constant need of powdering) plus have greasier hair. The culprit: progesterone, a hormone that peaks about six days before your period starts and causes the face and scalp to pump out more oil, says Ranela Hirsch, a dermatologist in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "It's the reason nearly every woman on the planet complains about a crappy complexion and slick hair the week before her period," says Dr. Hirsch.

YOUR GET-GORGEOUS PLAN

■ **Foil the oil.** Pretreatment tactics (check out our postovulation advice) can help head off an acne ambush this week. But to fight off the spots that do show up, mix equal dollops of a benzoyl peroxide-based spot treatment (we love Sonya Dakar Acne Zero, \$45) and one that contains sulfur (like Mario Badescu Drying Lotion, \$17) to fight bacteria and dissolve oil, says Howard Sobel, MD, director of NYC's Skin and Spa dermatology clinic. For hair, sub in a clarifying

shampoo (like Suave Daily Clarifying Shampoo, \$1.15); though it's made to degunk strands from styling buildup, it works just as well on oil.

■ **Conceal the deal.** The best way to hide all evidence of acne is to apply several thin layers of base. First, smooth foundation all over your face to even out your skin tone, then dab on concealer (creamy ones, like Maybelline New York Fit Me! Concealer, \$6.49, offer the most coverage) with a brush to get into the zit's divots, and set it all in place with powder, says NYC makeup artist Emily Kate Warren.

■ **Don't forget to moisturize.** It sounds counterintuitive, but pimples cause women to stress over their looks, and stress activates a certain gland, amping up oil production and decreasing the skin's ability to hold on to moisture, so you end up with both oily and dry patches, says dermatologist Leslie Baumann, author of *The Skin-Type Solution*. Plus, skipping moisturizer and loading up on acne meds is seriously drying, triggering your body to produce more oil. So reach for an oil-free moisturizer (we like Aveeno Smart Essentials Daily Moisturizer, \$15) to keep everything in balance.

(Body) Braids: (braids); from top) Christy L.; Rachel Leigh; Senior fashion and beauty editor: Rebecca Hessel Cohen; Hair: Marco Santini for Tiesse; Makeup: Tracy Murphy for Lancôme; Manicure: Elle for artistkimtopp.com; Pup stylist: Sonia Xixi.

Ovulation

week three



WHAT'S HAPPENING: Hel-lo, hot stuff! Around week's end, you'll be ovulating, and in the days preceding the big event, estrogen is at an all-month high, making you a total man magnet. Your hair looks shiny, and your skin appears

flush and radiant. "It's nature's way of helping women attract a sexual partner," says Dr. Hirsch.

YOUR GET-GORGEOUS PLAN

● **Take a breather.** Men are hardwired to be itching for you this week, and loads of research proves it. As we mentioned, they're subconsciously drawn to your natural aroma (feel free to shelve the perfume). And in a study by the University of Newcastle, participants were shown photos of both ovulating and nonovulating women, and they consistently pegged the ovulating ones as hotter (probably because of their glossy hair

likely to spend money on things like manis to make us feel hotter. So if you're craving some pampering, don't deprive yourself. But remember, he's going to seriously sweat you, chipped polish or not.

● **Show off a sexy bod.**

A study by the University of California Center for Behavior, Evolution, and Culture found that women are more likely to dress in body-revealing clothing at their most fertile time. So why not look übertouchable when rocking that sexy mini or deep-V dress? Draw



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COSMOPOLITAN

\$5 SPECIAL

POSTOVULATION

week four



WHAT'S HAPPENING: Once you've ovulated, your body gets to work producing two hormones...but unfortunately, they aren't going

to do your looks any favors. This week, you can expect a rise in both oil-producing testosterone and progesterone, which also causes you to retain water, says Jill Maura Rabin, a gyno in Long Island, New York, and author of *Mind Over Bladder*. Though the hormone levels aren't high enough to cause any major, visible damage yet, they'll be wreaking havoc in no time, so this week is all about prep work to decrease your soon-to-come PMS symptoms.



Smart Skin Saver

Using zit zappers now can prevent a Mount Vesuvius-like eruption next week. Borba PMS Skin Rescue (above), \$25, is a seven-day system of acid-rich ampoules that you apply post-cleansing.

YOUR GET-GORGEOUS PLAN

● **Beat bloat.** If you know that you always have to switch to your fat jeans once you're PMS-ing, start eating and drinking better this week. "It's easier to prevent bloating than to get rid of it," says NYC nutritionist Lisa R. Young, PhD, RD. Limit salty, fluid-retaining foods like soy sauce and fries, and munch on bloat-busting foods like melons and cucumbers. Guzzling as much water as you can right now (try herbal teas or water with lemon if plain H₂O gets boring) is also helpful.

● **Put in some face time.** A bit of prepping can also go a long way with PMS-related breakouts. They're scheduled to make their monthly appearance next week, so start working on those pores now. "Pre-treating skin with anti-acne ingredients like benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acids can keep sebum and bacteria levels in balance," says Dr. Baumann. Switch out your regular face wash for one containing these blemish busters (we like Neutrogena Clear Pore Daily Scrub, \$8).