

Beauty tools that are fast and effective?



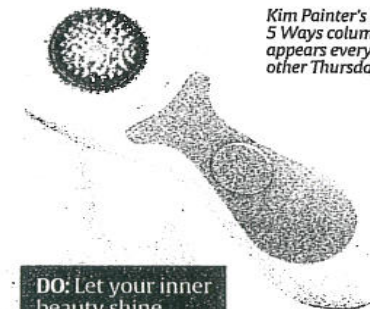
5 Ways
By Kim Painter



1 New hair dryer

If you have a decade-old warhorse, maybe it's time to consider an upgrade. Manufacturers have added static-reducing technology and replaced traditional wire heating coils with ceramic heating elements; many also have added a gemstone called tourmaline to the internal works — all of which, they claim, help today's dryers work faster and cause less damage than older models. The best news: Tests by *Consumer Reports* and *Good Housekeeping* have found that \$20 versions with these features work just as well as \$200 choices, though the cheaper dryers can be a bit noisier.

Sure, we'd all like to have sleekly groomed hair and skin, sparkling white teeth and wrinkle-free clothes every day. But unless you have unlimited primping hours, an ironing fetish and a movie-star-like devotion to spas and doctors (and the time and money to patronize them), perfection may remain out of reach. Is the answer in a growing array of home personal-care devices or new versions of old favorites? Here are five items that may or may not save you time and effort.



Kim Painter's 5 Ways column appears every other Thursday.

DO: Let your inner beauty shine by scrubbing off old skin cells.

3 Fast teeth-whitening kit

Some kits promise to whiten teeth in two hours — so that this morning's dull smile can be "noticeably whiter" before a lunchtime date. Can these products (including Crest and Rembrandt versions priced at about \$20 to \$40) really do that? "I think that's a true statement for some people," says Mickey Bernstein, a past president of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry who practices in Germantown, Tenn. Home kits use hydrogen peroxide, the same stuff used by dentists, and they can work quickly. But at home or in the dentist's office, results vary, Bernstein says: Younger people who start with whiter teeth typically get the best results. A home treatment is quicker and cheaper, but dentists can check your mouth for problems and offer "power bleaching" treatments that can't be used at home, he says.

DON'T: Use whiteners as a replacement for regular dental care.



4 1-minute face scrubber

The best-known brand is Clarisonic (with versions selling for \$150 to \$225), a battery-powered rotating brush that promises to remove more dirt and makeup than hand-washing and to exfoliate facial skin in a minute a day. It can be used in the shower. Other brands and generic versions are available at lower prices. Dermatologist Kauvar says the scrubbers work and are worth the minute: "You take that dead layer of skin off very efficiently, and it's very safe," as long as you don't combine it with a harsh cleanser.

5 Clothes steamer

Using a fabric steamer (available in handheld and floor models priced at \$25 to more than \$150) is a faster operation than setting up and using an ironing board and iron. Just hang up your garment, fire up the steamer, and pass the business end over the wrinkles. But do these things work? *Good Housekeeping* testers found they do, especially for soft fabrics, such as cotton jersey. But if you want a crisp dress shirt or a nice crease? You'll still need to set up the ironing board or visit the dry cleaners.

2 Home hair-removal device

Home devices that use either a laser or pulsed light to remove unwanted hair from legs, underarms and bikini areas have been available for a while. And new versions are about to hit the market, says Arielle Kauvar, a dermatologic surgeon in Manhattan. The devices (which now cost up to \$450 apiece) are cleared for safety by the Food and Drug Administration. But a device that is safe enough for home use is, necessarily, not as powerful, fast-acting or versatile for all skin types as those used in physicians' offices, Kauvar says. Home devices are less expensive but require "a big investment of time," she says.

