

Beauty bites: Vichy

A look inside the iconic French skincare brand

By Liza Herz



To know the skincare brand Vichy, you've got to first understand the water that bubbles up from springs located in the Auvergne region of south-central France. **It flows up through six layers of volcanic earth**, which act as filter and purifier as it makes its journey toward the surface. The water's resulting high mineral content—elements include calcium, magnesium, selenium and copper—is said to **cure everything from skin irritations to gastrointestinal ailments.**

The water has drawn the faithful since the Romans started going there in 52 BC. (**Even 20th-century style icon Coco Chanel served the famous mineral water while working as a singer there.**) And it's in every Vichy product to "fortify and soothe" the skin.

The skincare angle came about in 1931, when Parisian cosmetics manufacturer Georges Guérin was treated in Vichy by local spa doctor Prosper Haller. The two decided to develop a skincare line, and categories that the beauty industry uses to this day to describe skin—normal, dry, oily and combination—were set by the company back then.

When L'Oréal bought Vichy 24 years later in 1955, they narrowed the company's distribution to pharmacies to emphasize its "medicinal" qualities. Today it promotes itself as **the number one skincare brand in pharmacies across Canada and around the world.**

Vichy has more than 100 different products ranging from sun care and the famous Eau Thermale face spray to star anti-aging products such as moisturizer LiftActiv Retinol HA, which adds skin-plumping hyaluronic acid to retinol, a proven collagen builder.

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The company's focus on skin treatment is reflected in its easily identifiable, sometimes startling ads, which graphically illustrate wrinkles, age spots and cellulite. (This last is rendered, comically, as a female's behind that is dimpled with tufted sofa buttons.)

The company's attitude reflects a French vision of natural beauty. Although it does offer foundations (Aerateint and Normadermteint, as well as high-coverage Dermablend foundations to hide scars and vitiligo), "we give much more emphasis to skin treatment than to makeup," explains Stephanie Entraygues, Vichy's brand director. **"Healthy skin is the path to beautiful skin."**

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