Don’t neglect the space from your chin to your chest if you want to keep it looking as fresh as your face, says Prevention’s beauty editor Cecily-Anna Bennett.

Necks are a dead giveaway of one’s vintage, considering it’s a body part so often neglected (or should that be neck-lected)? A 2018 UK survey discovered that while almost 20 per cent of women believe the neck reaches “crisis point” at 40 (a bit dramatic, perhaps), 97 per cent admitted they didn’t use a neck cream targeted to treat neck lines, wrinkles or sagging.

WHY THE NECK AGES SO FAST
“The neck and décolletage region [the skin from our collar to our nipples], as well as the hands, elbows and knees are reliable ‘tells’ pointing to the life that one has led,” says Melbourne dermatologist Dr Adam Sheridan. “The skin is thin and vulnerable, and the relative lack of underlying fat means that any reduction in the quality of the skin [as with ageing] is evident for all to see.”

Add to that a lifetime of exposure to damaging environmental elements (wind, UV rays and pollution, to name a few), plus genetic factors, and it’s all you can do not to don a high-necked jumper for the rest of your life! If it’s an area you’re self-conscious about, the good news is that there may still be décolleté-exposing fashion in your future. It all starts with you taking onboard the idea that looking after your neck and chest are every bit as important as looking after your face. When it comes to skincare, start at your forehead, and work your way down past your chin… way, way down. Your loving daily “facecare” regimen really ought to stop at your boobs.

SOME GOOD NEWS
The beauty market is full of creams, masks and treatments designed to target this oft-neglected area of the body – and many of them can make a positive difference. It’s even possible to reverse established damage, Dr Sheridan says. As we age, among the most common concerns are crepey skin, reduced elasticity, visible capillaries and pigmentation. A number of products contain active ingredients that target skin renewal (see overpage).

Meanwhile, dermatologists offer professional treatments, including radiofrequency, ultrasound and laser. “These aim to reinvigorate the skin’s natural self-renewal processes and encourage formation of new healthy collagen and skin cells,” Dr Sheridan says. The takeaway? It’s never too late to start making a difference to your skin. And as for extending your “facecare” way beyond the chin? Trust us – your boobs will thank you for decades to come.
What’s best for general anti-ageing protection?

1. Strivectin TL Advanced Tightening Face & Neck Cream, RRP $148, Priceline
   Use this cream morning and night to boost volume, increase hydration and restore firmness and elasticity to your face, neck and beyond.

2. Skin Doctors Instant Neck, Chest & Hand Lift, RRP $49.95, Chemist Warehouse
   Glide the cooling rollerball over your neck, chest and the backs of your hands to tighten the skin, smooth wrinkles and improve the appearance of sagging.

3. Wrinkles Schminkles Chest & Décolletage Smoothing Kit, RRP $42, wrinklesschminkles.com
   Apply this adhesive, reusable silicone pad to smooth your chest, cleavage and décolletage, and inhibit the formation of wrinkles while you sleep.

4. Le Roche Posay Pigmentclar Serum (RRP $59.95, Priceline)

"To reduce lines
Pigmentation is often a result of long-term sun exposure, but, in a number of cases, it can be a diagnosable medical condition, Dr Maiolo advises. "If there are any new pigmented spots or lumps, these should be checked by a medical practitioner to confirm they are benign changes, and not a skin cancer," she says. "If an underlying medical condition has been ruled out, a number of ‘brightening’ products may be useful. These products contain various combinations of active ingredients, including vitamin C, kojic acid, licorice extract, glycolic acid and ascorbic acid."

To fade pigmentation
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Décolletage Clinic

Have a skincare concern you want to get off your chest? We’ve solved four of the main issues for you.

1. To minimise crepeyness

The crepey skin that can appear on your chest is often a result of sun exposure causing fine lines and degradation of elastin, says dermatologist Dr Corinne Maiolo. Prevent future damage by layering an antioxidant underneath your sunscreen. Try Synergie Skin Suprema C+ ($115, synergieskin.com). At night, apply a product that contains collagen-stimulating ingredients, such as retinol, peptides or growth factors. Try: Murad Retinol Youth Renewal Night Cream RRP $125, adorebeauty.com.au.

2. To reduce lines

Many people have lines on their neck naturally but, when we age, new wrinkles appear as collagen depletes. Slather on sunscreen, maintain good posture, keep your smartphone at eye level and use an anti-wrinkle treatment that contains patentyl oligoamide, a blend of fatty acids that encourage collagen production. Try: Dr LeWinn’s Reversaderm Collagen Accelerator Serum (RRP $69.95, drielwinn.com.au).

3. To fade pigmentation

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4. To smooth sagging

Sagging skin along the jaw, neck and décolletage occurs over time, as collagen and elastin start to break down. “Topical products are of less value for this type of skin ageing,” Dr Maiolo says. "Treatment options include radiofrequency devices, ultrasound therapy (which stimulates the growth of new collagen deep within the skin, acting as a non-surgical facelift) and surgical neck lift. All these have specific advantages and risks and may be costly or time-consuming." Always seek the advice of a trusted dermatologist or skin doctor first.