

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

How has the pandemic lockdown changed our daily facial skincare habits?

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Abstract

Background: During the COVID-19 pandemic, Poland implemented widespread closure of beauty and cosmetic services to control the virus spread.

Aims: The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on home face care of women and to analyze changes that have occurred in their daily habits.

Patients/Methods: An online survey was completed by 412 women living in Poland during the spring lockdown. Questions addressed changes in face care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results and conclusions: Our questionnaire showed that during the lockdown, women were more interested in face skincare, more often followed the procedure of full home skincare. And after implementing the changes in skincare, they saw a good impact on their skin. The significance of the Internet also increased considerably, not only as a source of knowledge in the field of cosmetology but also as a thriving market selling cosmetic products.

KEYWORDS

cosmetic treatment, COVID-19 pandemic, skincare habits

1 | BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 is a pandemic that has affected most people, either directly or indirectly. The COVID-19 pandemic has infiltrated into our lives in many ways and led to complete lockdown in almost every country, thus affecting millions of people. Many aspects of life including social life, work routine, and skincare habits had to change. Some people enjoyed extra free time for hobby, and others decided to dedicate it to their families or to acquiring new skills. Since beauty parlors had been closed down, many women had no other choice but to take care of their skin themselves.

2 | AIM

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on home face care of women and to analyze changes that have occurred in their daily habits.

3 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was anonymous and voluntary. It was conducted among 412 random Internet users aged 18–29 years during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in Poland.

The questionnaire was prepared by the authors to assess daily skincare habits during the lockdown in Poland. The survey was done between April 23 and April 28, 2020.

At that time, the following restrictions were in force in the country: keeping a 2-meter distance from other people in public areas; compulsory covering of the nose and mouth in public places, remote work, and education wherever possible; strict observance of sanitary rules in gatherings (disinfection and keeping a safe distance); quarantine and isolation imposed on infected or potentially infected people; limiting the number of passengers in public transport to 50 percent of seating capacity; limiting the number of customers in stores (in stores with an area of more than 100 m², at least 15 m² of space per one person was required, and in stores with an area of less than 100 m², the number of customers was restricted to the number of all cash registers or payment points multiplied by four); limiting the number of persons in places of religious worship to one person per 15 m²; shutting down hair salons, beauty parlors, tattoo studios, etc.; shutting down of restaurants and hotels; restrictions on the activities of cultural institutions (in cinemas, theaters, etc.); closing schools and universities, kindergartens, and nurseries; closing the national borders; closing passenger air transport; closing international rail transport; imposing mandatory quarantine for persons crossing the Polish border; and imposing restrictions on organization of mass events and gatherings.¹

The statistical analysis was done using Student's *t* test and chi-square test.

Test probability at *p* < 0.05 was considered significant.

4 | RESULTS

Among all the study participants, 61.7% of women who filled in the questionnaire declared higher education, whereas 88% of the responders were neither involved in beauty business nor had education in the field of cosmetology. As for the rest, 29% were

cosmetologists with university education, 29% completed secondary technical schools, and 8% worked in beauty supply stores, perfumeries, or drugstores.

Among all the respondents, during the pandemic, 12.4% worked online, 8.7% worked in their place of employment, 2.9% worked online and in their place of employment, 29.6% studied online, 7.8% studied online and worked online, and 3.6% studied online and worked in the place of employment.

Before the pandemic, 28% of the respondents declared providing themselves full face care (make-up removal, peel/exfoliation, serum, mask, cream) less frequent than once a week, 24% did it once a week, 15% two to three times a week, and 14% every day, whereas 19% never performed that procedure.

During the pandemic, 46% had full face care (make-up removal, peel/exfoliation, serum, mask, cream) two to three times a week, 20% once a week, 20% every day, 4% less than once a week, and 10% never. The change was statistically significant, *p* = 0.002.

The change in daily face care procedure during the lockdown in Poland is shown in Figure 1. There can be seen more complex daily care procedures during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, 54% of responders declared that they were more interested in proper home skincare. Among the unemployed, the change was declared by 62% of the respondents, and among the employed ones by 40% of the whole studied group (*p* < 0.001).

During the pandemic, 43% of the responders obtained information about skincare mainly from social networks and websites (eg, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram), 14% from cosmetologists (phone calls, online contact, blogs, funpages, websites), 11% from their relatives and friends, 11% from books, 2% from newspapers, and 1% from TV and radio. 18% of the responders declared that they did not seek that kind of information at all.

58% of the respondents declared that they devoted more time to daily skincare than before the pandemic. 75% of the responders with cosmetology education or working in the beauty business spent more time on daily care routine.

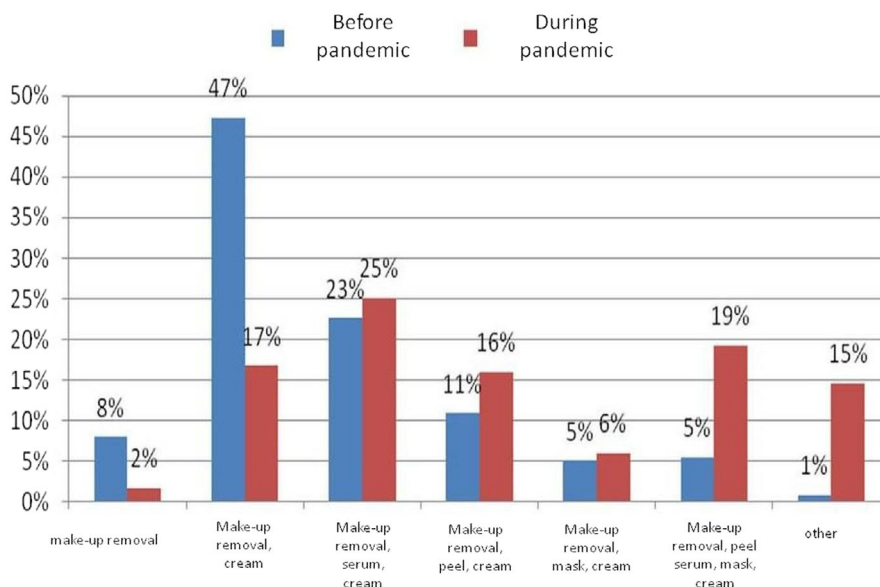


FIGURE 1 The comparison of daily facial care procedure before and during the pandemic

Among the women who declared spending more time on skin care, 63.8% of the responders did not have enough time for it before the pandemic, 17% did not want to do it, 12.5% did not think the skincare was essential for their skin, and 4.2% used to go to beauty parlors and thought that they did not need home skincare.

58% of responders declared to change their skincare habits during the pandemic. Among the women working in the place of employment, only 38% introduced changes, among the rest of the responders—62% ($p = 0.001$).

52% of the responders declared to have acne lesions or skin prone to acne, 25% reported vascular skin, 19% reported dry skin, 41% had mixed skin types, 8% reported erythema, and 34% reported hyperpigmentation or scars. Among the women who had skin problems, 62% of the respondents admitted that they devoted more time to skincare every day during the pandemic, and among those without any skin problems, 38% reported a change ($p = 0.027$).

27% of responders did not buy or plan to buy any new cosmetics for face care during the pandemic. 31% of the responders bought new cosmetics and planned to buy more, and 24% of the survey participants had not bought any new products before filling in the questionnaire; however, they planned to buy some, and 18% of the responders bought new cosmetics, and did not plan to buy any more.

The change in preferred places to buy cosmetics before and during the pandemic is shown in Figure 2. The responders who work in a place of their employment more often buy face care cosmetics in drugstores than the others (37% vs. 26%, $p = 0.034$). Before the pandemic, the correlation was not observed.

During the pandemic, our responders declared to spend more money on cosmetics. The survey participants with cosmetology education or working in the beauty spent more money on cosmetics than the other, before or during the pandemic.

Due to spending more time on face care or changing face care, 33% of the responders noticed a slight improvement of their skin, 14% observed a considerable improvement, 21% did not see any difference, and 8% declared that the face skin was worse than before. 24% of the responders did not change face care in any way.

Among the women with cosmetology education or working in the beauty business, 76% observed an improvement of face skin due to more time spent on face care ($p = 0.036$).

Changing skincare routine led to skin improvement. Among the women who introduced changes, 70% of the responders saw improvement of the skin, and only 37% among the women who did not change anything ($p < 0.01$). Along with a higher frequency of full face care, the percentage rate of women who saw skin improvement increased ($p = 0.001$). In line with the frequency of full home facial care procedure, the improvement of the skin condition was declared (Figure 3).

Most of the responders (60.3%) planned to continue changed daily skincare, 6.3% of the survey participants did not plan to do it because of lack of time, 2.4% due to lack of observable effects, and the other did not give any reason for their decision.

90% of the responders who declared improvement of face skin planned to continue the new daily face care routine. Among those who did not see any beneficial change, only 60% declared the willingness to continue their new skincare routine ($p < 0.001$).

5 | DISCUSSION

The first studies conducted after the outbreak of the COVID-SARS2 pandemic have shown, that the frequency of handwashing increased due to the risk of infection.^{2,3} Also, guidelines on hand hygiene were

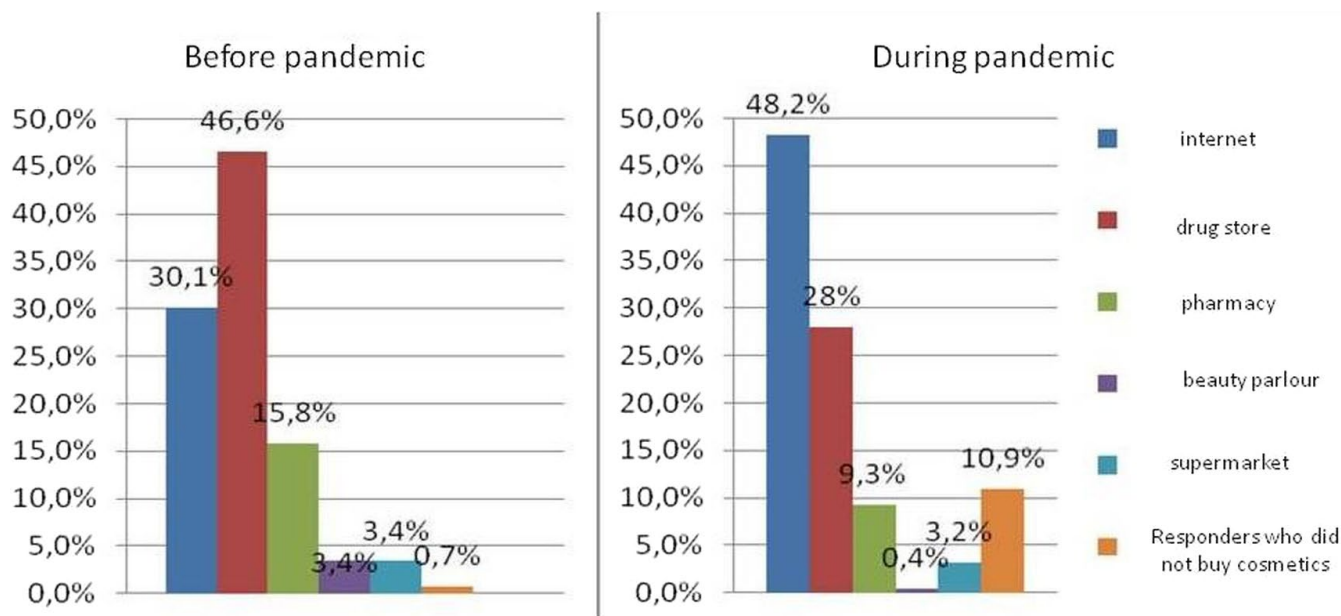
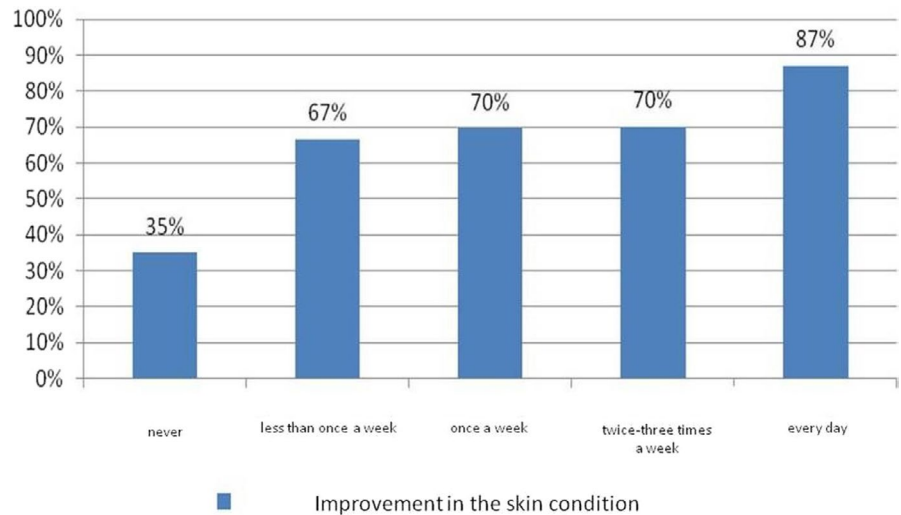


FIGURE 2 The change in preferred places to buy cosmetics before and during the pandemic

FIGURE 3 Improvement in the skin condition of the respondents depending on the frequency of full home facial care procedure during the pandemic



more often sought in the Internet. The aim of the paper is to describe changes in face skincare during the spring lockdown in Poland.

Conscious and proper face care is the key to healthy skin. Before the pandemic, 33% of the respondents provided themselves full face care (make-up removal, peel/exfoliation, serum, mask, cream) less frequently than once a week. It should be emphasized that full face care should be provided two or three times a week. During the pandemic, 46% of women had proper skincare, whereas 20% declared going through the procedure of full face care every day, which means that they used peel too often. Excessive exfoliation of the epidermis may lead to destruction of the skin natural hydrolipidic barrier, dysregulation of the sebaceous glands, and hypersensitivity. The responders may not be well educated in skincare; however, our original questionnaire also showed that most often they searched for information on proper skincare.

Before the pandemic, most of the responders removed makeup and applied cream every day. During the pandemic, more responders provided themselves more complex skincare. 58% declared spending more time on skincare and 54% got more interested in skincare (those were mostly unemployed women). Among the women who declared spending more time on home skincare, 4.2% used to visit beauty parlors regularly before the pandemic and they thought home skincare was not required for them. Nevertheless, it is generally known that professional and home care are supplementary. Following a proper daily routine brings visible skin benefits and prevents skin aging.⁴

During the pandemic, most of the responders (43%) found information about skincare on the Internet. In 2016, 36% of students got information from the Internet, 20% from colleagues (now 11%), 5% from newspaper (now 2%), 9% from TV (now 1%), and 6% from cosmetologists (now 14%).⁵ To sum up, during the spring pandemic, there was an increased interest in information and guidelines on skincare, both those found on the Internet and obtained from professionals, that is, cosmetologists. It was easy to obtain information about skincare on the Internet because many cosmetic companies made online courses or applied marketing strategies. Moreover,

due to the lockdown, many beauty salons offered virtual or phone consultations or provided tutorials on proper skincare.⁶ Phone and video consultations on dermatologic and esthetic care were offered as well.⁷ Sephora offered virtual beauty advisers and tutorials via special applications. L'Oreal used new applications that offered clients an option of testing products on a "mirror".⁸ A positive aspect of the lockdown is a huge development of Internet technologies.

Purchase of cosmetic products in Internet shops also increased. Before the pandemic, 30% of the responders used to do it, whereas during the pandemic, it was 50%. L'Oreal e-commerce sales grew by 52,6%. Online sales of this company accounted for about one-fifth of total sales.⁸ Our responders less often bought cosmetic products in shops (47% vs. 28%). The most probable reason was the fear of the virus. Our questionnaire showed that the responders spent more money on cosmetic products during the pandemic. It is difficult to interpret these results in economic terms since some people became interested in face care and, as a consequence, bought new cosmetics; however, many people lost their jobs during the pandemic, so theoretically, they might have had limited financial resources.

Acne was the most common skin problem reported in our questionnaire (it affected 52% of the responders). The survey participants were women aged below 30 years. Acne lesions are known to be the most frequent skin problem in general, also before the pandemic.⁵ Proper skincare is particularly important in skin diseases and during a lockdown or shutting down of beauty salons as it helps reduce acne lesions.

The survey showed that, thanks to devoting more time to home face care, most of the respondents observed an improvement in their skin condition. The study also demonstrated that they associated those effects with changes in their face care, and the frequency with which they were implemented. It is also satisfactory that as many as 90% of the women reporting an improvement of their skin condition intend to continue the newly introduced face care routine. This shows that if only some changes are made, the effects may be noticed quickly. The visible effect motivates to continue the procedure. Apart from devoting enough time for care, it is worth supporting it with specialist knowledge, and 76% of people related to the

cosmetics industry noticed an improvement in the condition of the skin.

To sum up, our questionnaire showed that during the lockdown women more often followed the procedure of full home skincare. The significance of the Internet also increased considerably, not only as a source of knowledge in the field of cosmetology but also as a thriving market selling cosmetic products.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data available on request from the authors.

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