

Stress and Your Skin

The connection between your mind and your pores

According to the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), the feelings we have on the inside can affect how we look on the outside. The key to healthy skin lies far beyond the type of soap we use. Feelings of stress can affect how the skin ages by influencing certain processes in the body that lead to oxidation and inflammation.

Here's the gist: Chemical processes in the body produce molecules called free radicals. These enemies of the skin can damage healthy cells in a process called oxidation. Factors such as sun exposure, smoking, air pollution, poor diet and excess stress can speed up the production of free radicals.

The body also produces antioxidants that remove free radicals from the body before they can do any damage. By taking care of yourself and reducing your stress, you can increase the production of these molecules to save the look of your skin.

Skin and Stress Connection

Stress can have the following effects on the skin:

- Adrenaline produced from anxiety redirects blood away from the skin to the muscles so that it becomes pale and washed out.
- Anger, excitement, irritability and frustration releases chemicals that stimulate the sebaceous glands which produce oil. This blocks pores and can cause acne to form.
- Stress makes muscles tenser and prevents blood from bringing oxygen and nutrients to the skin. Tension can also slow the removal of waste from underlying tissue.
- Excess strain slows down the cell turnover rate so new cells take longer to reach the skin. Consequently, a lot of their moisture is lost, making the skin look dull.
- Constant stress increases cortisone secretion, which suppresses immunity. As a result, the skin is not as resilient, and can become more irritated by outside chemicals and pollutants.
- Excess stress can make psoriasis and rosacea conditions worse and acne lesions more inflamed. It can also worsen fever blisters and dermatitis.

Stress-Free Skin Solutions

- Try deep breathing techniques to calm yourself when feeling extremely stressed. Also consider taking a yoga, Pilates or meditation course to relax your mind and body.
- Seek out professional assistance through a psychologist or psychiatrist to identify what triggers in your life are causing anxiety and stress.
- Visit a dermatologist to treat your specific skin problems. Clearer skin may start diminishing your stress, as you'll have more confidence and will look better.

