

Stress & Your Skin

1. How do you define stress?

Cultural Stress™ is a term I use to describe a new type of stress, which is the constant and pervasive stress of modern day living, plays havoc on physical well-being and is turning into a societal crisis. I have done significant research and have found that 90% of health problems today can in part be attributed to Cultural Stress. People need to look at and better understand the relationship between skin conditions and lifestyle. There will be a true acknowledgement of other components, not just topical care, to improve skin health. In order to have the best skincare, you have to apply the best products to your skin and you have to make your heart happy and begin to understand that your skin and the rest of your body are connected and your emotions play a big part of that.

2. How does stress affects face skin?

The negative effects of Cultural Stress can present itself on the skin with extreme dehydration that results in inflammation, hyperpigmentation, dullness and adult acne. When you're stressed the dead cell layer on the surface of the skin becomes thin, with microscopic holes in it, which can't protect as well against aging UV rays. Stress not only can cause you breakouts, it creates tiny holes in your cell membranes that lead to water leaking out of your cells, dehydrating your skin which ultimately causes fine lines, wrinkles, and a lackluster skin tone.

3. Can you prevent stress skin damage? How?

You can reduce stress by maintaining a healthy connection with friends and family, and by structuring a positive social environment to help address your emotional self-care. By optimizing your internal, external and emotional environments, your population of cells will be younger and stronger which will help to resolve your skin concerns. Here are some tips I recommend to my patients:

1. **Get a Hobby:** When you have a hobby, it forces you to take time out for yourself and do something enjoyable, while providing you time to reflect.
2. **Get Connected:** One of the easiest ways to reduce your isolation is to join a group that shares similar hobbies, philosophies, and interests.
3. **Disconnect:** There's an odd duality to being attached to machines that allow us to connect with others around the world in an instant. When you are constantly communicating with someone by electronic transmission rather than in person or even over the phone, you lose touch of the experience. You also have a tendency to lose focus, as those transmissions become rapid-fire, frequent, distracting and intrusive. In a nutshell, put down your phones! Take time at least twice a week to not check your phone or email. It's a healthy mental break.
4. **Get Touched:** I recommend that everyone visit a spa or massage therapist center as frequently as possible. Massage not only benefits the muscles and tissues being kneaded and stretched but also has been found to lower stress levels significantly. It can help alleviate depression, reduce pain in cancer patients, improve sleep patterns, and positively alter the immune system.
5. **Start Your Day Off Right:** Deficiencies in B vitamins, vitamin C, calcium, magnesium stress out your body and trigger and increase in cortisol levels, not to mention food cravings. Many people skip breakfast and

can easily find themselves lacking these critical nutrients and in turn rely on caffeine to stay alert and productive throughout the day. Try eating a handful of berries (vitamin C), six to eight ounces of low-fat yogurt (calcium and magnesium), and a slice of whole grain toast with natural peanut butter. Whole grains are loaded with B vitamins, while peanut butter contains fatty acids that can decrease the production of stress hormones. Peanut butter will also keep you satisfied longer.

6. **Get To Bed:** Almost every system in the body is affected by the quality and amount of sleep you get at night. Sleep can dictate how much you eat, how fat you get, whether you can fight off infections, and how well you can cope with stress. Turn off the TV one hour prior to sleeping and refrain from stressful activities and conversations two hours prior to retiring to the bedroom. I tell my patients: "Try to get a minimum of eight hours a night because sleep is an ideal time for cellular renewal and overall repair for the skin."

4. Which are the consequences of an inadequate skin care?

Without proper cleansing, bacteria can survive (and thrive) on your skin, leading to breakouts. Also, the free radicals your skin encounters during the day, from pollution, sun and environmental exposure, can build up, causing tissue damage which leads to accelerated aging – thus, it is vital to use a daily moisturizer that contains a broad spectrum sunscreen to protect against harmful UV rays. Also, not hydrating properly can lead to fine lines and wrinkles.

Start to take care of your skin when you are young, so you can reap the benefits of beautiful, youthful, and healthy skin later. Take proper care of yourself by treating yourself to facials, along with eating nutrient rich foods to give your skin and body the power it needs to look and feel its best. And don't be so hard on yourself. Trying to be perfect everyday causes stress that speeds up. I have a saying I like to share with my patients, "Be imperfect; live longer."

5. Can skin damage caused by stress be reverted?

While damage can't be reverted, it certainly can be improved and since your cells are constantly turning over and renewing themselves, you can improve and prevent future damage. For wrinkles, sallow skin, and other signs of aging caused by stress, you want to help skin fight back against free radicals and environmental damage with antioxidants. Look for products that contain ingredients that protect and build the barrier function of the skin, as well as help promote the health of your cells, locking in intracellular water. Try products with ceramides and hyaluronic acid. They absorb water and surround each dead skin cell with lipids, making the cell more able to hang on to water. This will result in smooth, soft, plump skin which helps reduce the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines. My other favorite anti-aging ingredients include Retinol, Carotenoids, Vitamin C, Peptides and Pomegranate Extract.

6. Which are the most important risk factors that cause skin damage?

The most common mistakes women make with skincare is not taking into account that their overall lifestyle has a big impact on their skin; internal diet and emotional self-care, are a big part of how their skin will look and feel. Try to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables that are packed with hydrating, anti-inflammatory, and nutrient packed agents to help your skin and body look and feel its best. It is also important to have a daily 3-step regimen that includes cleansing, treating, and moisturizing that is formulated for your specific skin type and concerns.

Daily use of full-spectrum UVA/UVB sun protection (at least SPF 15) is critical to prevent against wrinkles, age spots and compromised skin tone. Sometimes sun protection is sacrificed by women because they want to avoid

using too much product on the face. Simply choose a moisturizer that already contains SPF, or mix a sun protector with liquid makeup for a 2-in-1 product, to sidestep this problem. Sun damage is cumulative and shows up later as signs of aging, or in worse case scenarios, as skin cancer. Ninety-five percent of all skin cancers are found on light-exposed areas such as the face, top of the ears, neck and chest. Because over a million new cases of skin cancer in the U.S. are diagnosed each year (plus, the large numbers that go unreported), protecting yourself every day with a broad based (UVA/UVB) sunscreen and clothing is more important than ever.

7. In average, which percentage of skin damage and aging is caused by stress?

While, we don't know the exact percentage, we do know that it is a huge factor in skin damage and aging.

8. Is food an important concern in skincare?

Yes! Internal skincare, including diet and supplement intake, is a huge component in looking and feeling young, along with topical and emotional care, of my Inclusive Health approach to skincare. Internal care address the needs of the entire body – including the 80% of skin that topical care can't reach - by flooding it with the nutrients it needs to build strong, healthy new cells, and antioxidants that neutralize cell-damaging free radicals in the blood stream. Internal care means making good food choices and using dietary supplements to fill in the gaps. An easy way to stay on track is to think about eating your water. Colorful raw fruits and vegetables such as watermelon, cucumbers, zucchini, tomatoes and eggplant are not just great sources of water for your cells – they are nutritional powerhouses too.

Healthy skin is a reflection of overall wellness. When the body is at optimal health, the skin will follow suit.

9. And what about water?

For optimal cellular hydration, you should eat your water, not drink it. It's a common misconception that the body needs eight glasses of water a day. I challenge my patients to replace just one of those glasses with raw fruits and vegetables. Not only will they stay hydrated longer, they will get vital nutrients to help build stronger cells, resulting in a healthier, more resilient complexion.

10. At which age does fine lines and wrinkles appear?

Most signs of aging begin to emerge when people are in their 20's with the appearance of fine lines, dry skin, and a tired complexion. So to ensure skin continues to look young and supple, embark on an anti-aging skincare routine now. Use products that incorporate Alpha Hydroxy Acids (AHAs), Vitamins A and C, as well as Glycolic Acid to keep skin smooth and radiant.

11. Can exercising diminish stress effects in skin? How?

Yes - Exercising regularly not only reduces stress, it nourishes the skin with oxygen while sweating flushes out toxins. It will also improve digestion and increase one's metabolism and endocrine function so that the entire body is functioning at an optimal level.

12. How is an adequate skincare routine (for day and night)?

Your daily skincare routine should be simple and meet the needs of your unique complexion. A fool-proof routine is one that you'll follow faithfully as consistency is a key factor in long-term skin health. I recommend building your program around three easy steps:

- 1) **Cleanse/Tone** Wash your face morning and night with warm, never hot, water with a gentle cleanser to remove dirt, makeup, oil and dead skin cells. Cleansers remove irritants and prepare your skin for treatment. When shopping for a cleanser, finding the best wash for you is a trial-and-error process although speaking to your dermatologist is a great place to start. After cleansing, your skin should feel soft to the touch. If it feels dry or stiff, your cleanser is too harsh and you should try another.
- 2) **Treat/Repair** What are your skin concerns? Acne? Deep wrinkles? Age/Brown spots? Treatment products are targeted to help with specific skin concerns so look for products that contain specific ingredients to combat the issue, whichever you may be experiencing. This targeted approach helps repair damage and restore your skin to its healthiest. Every skincare regimen should also include exfoliation – but strength and frequency should depend on how sensitive your skin is. Light exfoliants can be used weekly, while facials or other professional treatments should not be more frequent than every four to six weeks.
- 3) **Moisturize/Protect** Moisturizers should be used both morning and night, even if you have oily skin. Make sure your daytime moisturizer contains a broad spectrum SPF to help protect skin from ultraviolet rays, a powerful aging accelerator. It's not just for the beach - most sun damage occurs from incidental UV exposure during day-to-day activities. Also, look for a nighttime moisturizer that contains antioxidants, anti-inflammatories, and extra hydrators to help combat free radical damage.

