

## The Visible Effects of Stress

### Get a Grip on Anxiety and Clear Your Complexion

Barbara Hey

Eons ago, back when humankind's main activities for the day were evading predators and foraging for food, stress was essential to survival. The body's fight-or-flight response to stress in the face of danger set off a chain reaction of physiological changes, priming the body for action and increasing the likelihood of escaping physical harm.

These days stress is more often induced by threats of the psychological or emotional kind, but the physiological response is the same. While stability-shattering events such as divorce, illness, or job loss take their toll, it's the low-grade, chronic stress--commuter traffic, rebellious computers, overbooked schedules--that

### Your Face Says It All

"Stress is a major deterrent to having good skin," according to Howard Murad, a dermatologist and CEO of skin care company Murad, Inc. "Even if you eat a perfect diet, if you're under stress you're not going to like the way it looks on you."

The link between stress and skin is becoming clearer all the time. "There are many studies that show the direct connection between the brain, endocrine system, and your skin," Murad says. One such study found that stress causes deterioration in the skin's permeability barrier, which is the body's front line of protection against the



Managing the low-grade, chronic stress of modern life can brighten your complexion.

does the greatest damage to body, mind, and even appearance. In addition to the well-documented stress-related illnesses such as heart disease, insomnia, and backaches, chronic stress can take a toll on your skin by increasing oil production and exacerbating acne, eczema, atopic dermatitis, and psoriasis. In other words, anxiety may be standing between you and a clear complexion.

outside world and essential to our survival. According to Peter Elias, a professor of dermatology at the University of California, San Francisco, who led the study, when that barrier breaks down, there is havoc: The release of molecules, whose job it is to shore up the barrier, initiates inflammation in

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*"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."*

- W. A. Ward

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deeper layers of the skin, causing irritation and dryness.

"When you're stressed, the barrier function of your skin gets damaged, and there's transdermal water loss," Murad says. This means fluid is lacking in all layers of the skin, which causes a dull complexion and exacerbates wrinkles.

Furthermore, stress throws the body's biochemical balance out of whack. The fight-or-flight response in the brain sends a message to the body to get ready for action. Then the adrenal glands produce adrenaline and noradrenaline, as well as the stress hormone cortisol, activating the metabolism and keying the body to respond to the threat, whether truly life-threatening or just being late for an appointment.

In regular, peaceful circumstances, the stressor goes away and hormones return to normal levels. But chronic stress--the scourge of modern life--can have long-lasting, chaotic effects on the body's biochemistry. Instead of dissipating, cortisol lingers in the body, which depresses the immune system and brings on hormonal imbalances, causing increased sebum production. Skin gets oilier and breakouts occur.

## Erasing the Fallout

The good news is, plenty can be done to ease stress, minimize its effects, and benefit skin and all-around health. In addition to stress-reducing practices (meditation, yoga, massage, exercise, vacations, etc.), nutrition supplements play an important role. "There are several important nutrients for skin that few get in sufficient quantities, particularly when under stress," according to Ann Louise Gittleman, Ph.D., clinical nutritionist and author several natural health books, including "The Fat Flush Plan" (McGraw Hill/Contemporary Books, 2002) and "The Living Beauty Detox Program" (Harper San Francisco, 2000).

No. 1, she says, is essential fatty acids. The most important for skin is gamma linolenic acid (GLA), found in borage oil, black currant seed oil, and evening primrose. "Roughly 33 percent of all adults are deficient in GLA, which supports the skin cell membranes," she says. "It's been shown to be an effective treatment for inflammation and

moisture loss associated with dry skin and aging, and a potent anti-inflammatory. Studies have shown that borage oil applied topically has a very dramatic healing effect on eczema, psoriasis, and contact dermatitis."

So, apply it topically or take it internally? How about both? "I love the concept of beauty inside and out," Gittleman says. That is to say, apply and consume it. As for internal consumption, Gittleman recommends a daily, high-quality GLA supplement of 500 mg.

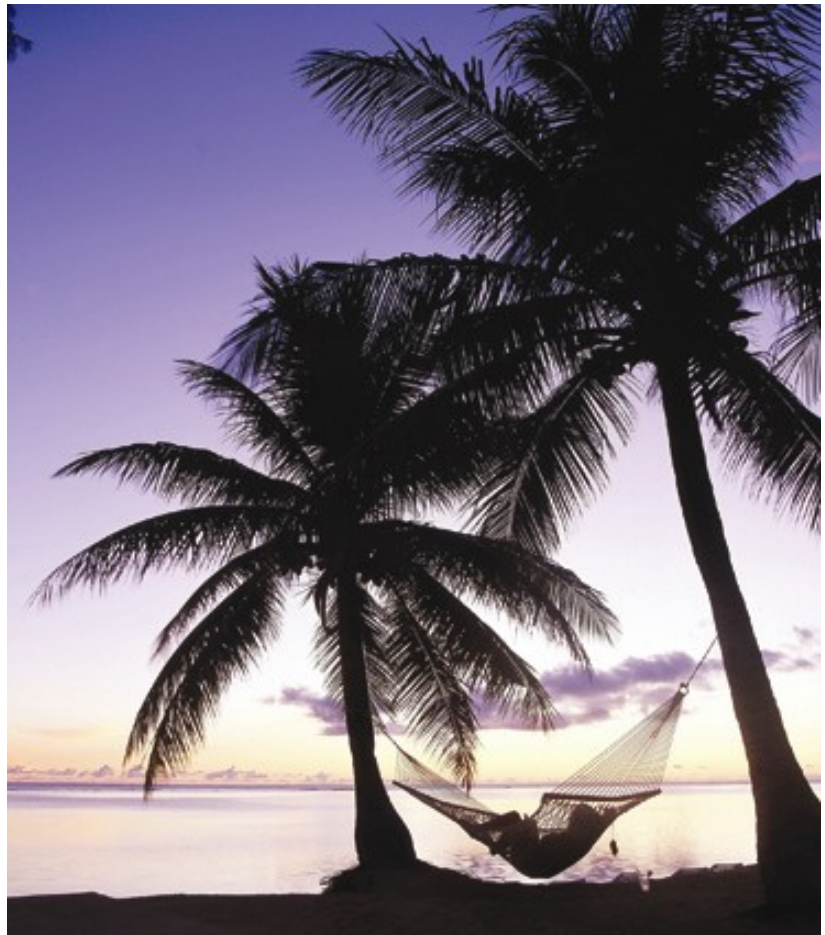
Internal organs also need support in times of stress, particularly the adrenal system. "Pantothenic acid, a B vitamin, is the best support for the adrenals," she says. "It balances out the cortisol." Gittleman's recommendation: 500 mg, three times a day.

For those under maximum stress loads, Gittleman suggests an adrenal support supplement that includes zinc, tyrosine, and vitamin B6, three tablets in the morning and three more before 4 p.m. (But always check specific dosage directions, and confer with a healthcare

practitioner for the most appropriate remedy and dosage.)

She also notes that when stressed, the body tends to secrete magnesium, and recommends 400 mg in the morning and 400 mg right before bed. "That can help with sleep," she says. (For more information, visit Gittleman's website, [www.fatflush.com](http://www.fatflush.com).)

Stress can wreak havoc with your complexion and be the obstacle standing in the way of clear skin. Addressing this root cause can be pivotal in achieving clarity--on your face and in your soul.



Relaxation can help dissipate stress hormones that contribute to wrinkles and a dull skin tone.

# Elimination Effect

## Clear Skin Depends on Internal Wellness

Shelley Burns, N.D.

Do you often wonder why a skin blemish has not resolved or why acne outbreaks continue in spite of countless therapies? If so, you may need to dig a bit deeper and look inside--inside your body, that is. Good digestive health and the health of your colon can mean healthy skin.

### THE QUESTION IS, HOW?

Both the colon and skin are responsible for absorbing and releasing chemicals, water, and other metabolic products. The colon is the largest internal organ in the body. Its function is specifically to absorb food, nutrients, and water.

One function of skin is to help the body breathe. It inhales and exhales similar to how the lungs work. Inhalation and exhalation by the skin allows it to open pores and perspire. So, sweating is a good thing.

When the colon is unable to get rid of waste produced from food, the colon becomes constipated and toxic. The skin also becomes toxic in trying to perform the elimination function, and often

results in skin eruptions in the form of acne, eczema, and psoriasis.

### PREVENTION

You can avoid some of this trouble with these tips:

- Consider removing certain foods from your diet--especially dairy. An allergy to milk and other dairy products can cause severe acne.
- Drink at least 64-80 ounces of water every day, as it lubricates the colon and helps with regularity.
- Refrain from dehydrating beverages like alcohol, coffee, and soda, as they can cause constipation.
- Strive for a daily bowel movement--try 1-3 teaspoons of ground flax seeds added to your breakfast.

Beautiful skin starts from the inside out. Adopting these practices will not only improve colon and skin health, but will promote your overall health as well.



Water intake can clarify skin.

# Flax Facts

## Reap the Health Benefits of This Little Seed

Flaxseed, the humble little brown seed with a nutty flavor, is a powerhouse in the nutrition world. It's able to reduce blood pressure, decrease risk of heart attacks and stroke, improve skin quality, help control blood sugar levels, reduce cholesterol, and even prevent breast and colon cancer--all in a single seed!

But what makes flax so powerful? Flaxseed contains high concentrations of alpha linoleic acid, a form of omega-3 fatty acids, which serve as the basic building blocks of cell walls. Additionally, flax is high in lignans, powerful antioxidants known for alleviating menopausal symptoms and fighting breast cancer. There are three forms of flaxseed, making it easy to incorporate into your diet.

### FLAX OIL

While available in capsule form to be taken as a supplement, flax oil is best consumed as a food to get the most benefits from it. Many nutritionists often recommend purchasing the oil in

small quantities, storing it in the refrigerator, and consuming a daily intake of two tablespoons. You can add a tablespoon to your morning smoothie or substitute flax oil in the vinaigrette dressing for your salad.

Flax oil breaks down to trans fats when heated, so it should never be used in cooking. While lower in lignans than other forms of flax, the oil is sometimes processed to preserve the lignans. Check the label for details.

### FLAXSEEDS

Whole seeds are sure to have all the nutritional benefits of flax. Simply add these to your granola or salads for a nutty flavor. If a little tough on the teeth, grind them in a coffee grinder and sprinkle on foods. One note: raw, whole flaxseeds contain chemicals that can affect thyroid function. To get around this, simply toast the seeds in the oven for twenty minutes at 250 degrees, or limit your consumption of raw seeds to three to four tablespoons a day.

### FLAX MEAL

Ground flax meal is another option to get the powerful nutritional value of flax. Add a tablespoon of it to your smoothies for extra fiber, or stir it into your oatmeal in the morning.

*"Acknowledging  
the good that  
you already have  
in your life is the  
foundation for  
all abundance."*

-Eckhart Tolle

Hey there Leading Lady! I hope you have enjoyed this month's issue of the Leading Lady Newsletter. I have am grateful that you invested a couple of minutes in yourself to read through the articles. Have a productive and fulfilling month!

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MEMBER

