

## 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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*How many  
cares one loses  
when one  
decides not to  
be something,  
but to be  
someone.*

-Coco Chanel

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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."

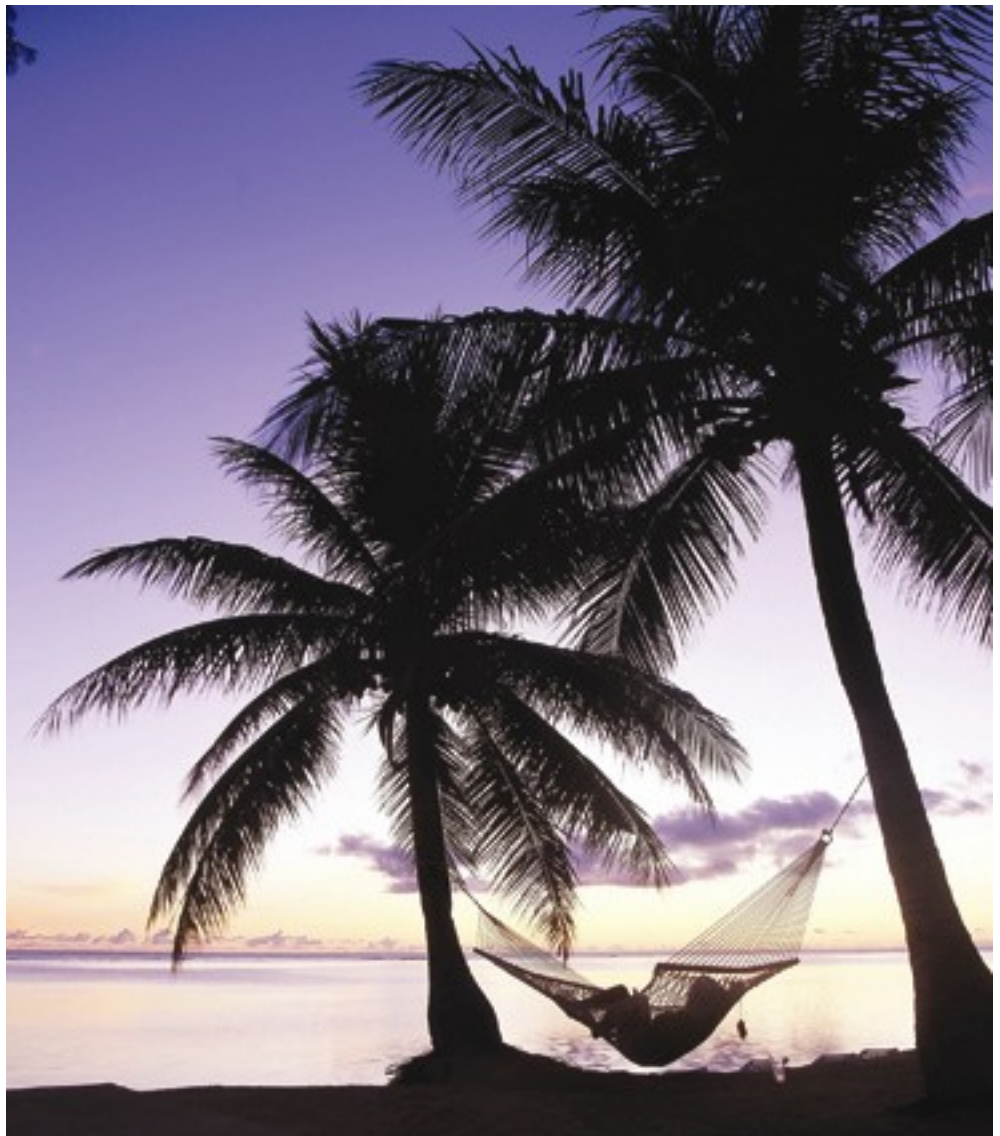
So, apply it topically or take it internally? How about both? "I love the concept of beauty inside and out," Gittleman says. That is to say, apply and consume it. As for internal consumption, Gittleman recommends a daily, high-quality GLA supplement of 500 mg.

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.

# The Wonders of Water

## For Skin Health and More

Shelley Burns, N.D.

Creams, nutritional supplements, treatments, lotions, and potions. We are always looking for the next miracle product to keep skin looking healthy and young. However, there is one essential, inexpensive, and often overlooked nutrient right at your fingertips: water.

Just as a car cannot function without oil, our bodies cannot function without water. After oxygen, H<sub>2</sub>O is the most important component of the body, responsible for 65-70 percent of its composition. And of this, 80 percent is dedicated to the skin.

Water is the medium for various enzymatic and chemical reactions in the body. It moves nutrients, hormones, antibodies, and oxygen through the blood and lymphatic systems, and it also helps form the matrix of the skin. Devoid of water, the skin becomes dehydrated, resulting in a dry, dull tone.

It's likely that the moment a person feels thirsty, mild dehydration has already set

in. To keep the complexion looking smooth and blemish-free, drink water upon waking and continue drinking it throughout the day at one- to two-hour intervals. At least six 8-oz. glasses of water should be consumed daily and more if you are exercising, perspiring, and/or in hot weather. Ideally, intake should be between ten and twelve 8-oz. glasses of water a day. One note: Don't increase water intake all at once, as the kidneys and digestive system need time to adjust. Add one 8-oz. glass every day or every second day.

What counts toward your daily water intake? Just the basics: water and herbal tea. Caffeinated beverages and alcoholic drinks are diuretics that can contribute to dehydration, requiring even more hydration after drinking.

Not only is water important for skin health, it can also play a key role in the prevention of disease. Drinking eight glasses of water a day can decrease the risk of colon cancer, bladder cancer, and potentially even breast cancer.



Water helps keep the body at optimum health.

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# The Appropriate Portion

## Small Diet Modifications Can Mean Big Changes

Dropping a few extra pounds may mean reversing the voice in your head that sounds suspiciously like your mother telling you to clean your plate. Here's why: eating just one hundred extra daily calories--which may come from finishing everything on your plate, even after you're full--can represent ten added pounds in a year. Conversely, and fortunately, reducing your daily intake by just a small amount can help you manage and even lose weight. Following are a few portion control tips to help you meet your goals.

### Eat at Home

Dine in, and fill your own plate. Studies show that most people serve themselves smaller portions at home, but eat more when someone else fills their plate.

Restaurant portions have grown significantly in recent years, in some cases doubling, and research has directly tied obesity with regular dining out. When you dine at home, serve yourself only what you think you can comfortably eat. Store leftovers in individual serving containers, and freeze them or take them for lunch the next day.

### Slow Down

Pay attention to how fast you're eating. Slowing down helps you eat less and better recognize when you're full. When you dine out, ask your server for a box. If you continue to pick at your plate while talking with friends, you'll soon eat the whole thing without even thinking about it. This mindless eating can account for a lot of calories.

### Divvy up Dinner

Sharing an entree with your dining partner and ordering an extra salad is a great way to avoid eating a large meal. If you're traveling and dining alone, try an appetizer and salad.

You've heard the reports: Obesity is one of the greatest risk factors for heart disease, degenerative arthritis, and cancer, and it's now epidemic in the United States with an alarming 66 percent of all adults obese.

The good news is watching your portions, slowing down, and being mindful of the food you consume can make a difference. Even your mother would agree, you don't always need to clean your plate.

*Kindness in  
words creates  
confidence.  
Kindness in  
thinking creates  
profoundness.  
Kindness in  
giving creates  
love.*

-Lao-Tzu

## HUMMUS

### INGREDIENTS

2 cups canned garbanzo beans, drained  
1/3 cup tahini  
1/4 cup lemon juice  
1 teaspoon salt  
2 cloves garlic, halved  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 pinch paprika  
1 teaspoon minced fresh parsley

### DIRECTIONS

Place the garbanzo beans, tahini, lemon juice, salt and garlic in a blender or food processor. Blend until smooth. Transfer mixture to a serving bowl. Drizzle olive oil over the garbanzo bean mixture. Sprinkle with paprika and parsley.

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MEMBER

