

## 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

*"Healthy skin is only a touch away."*

-Lori Murtagh



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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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.

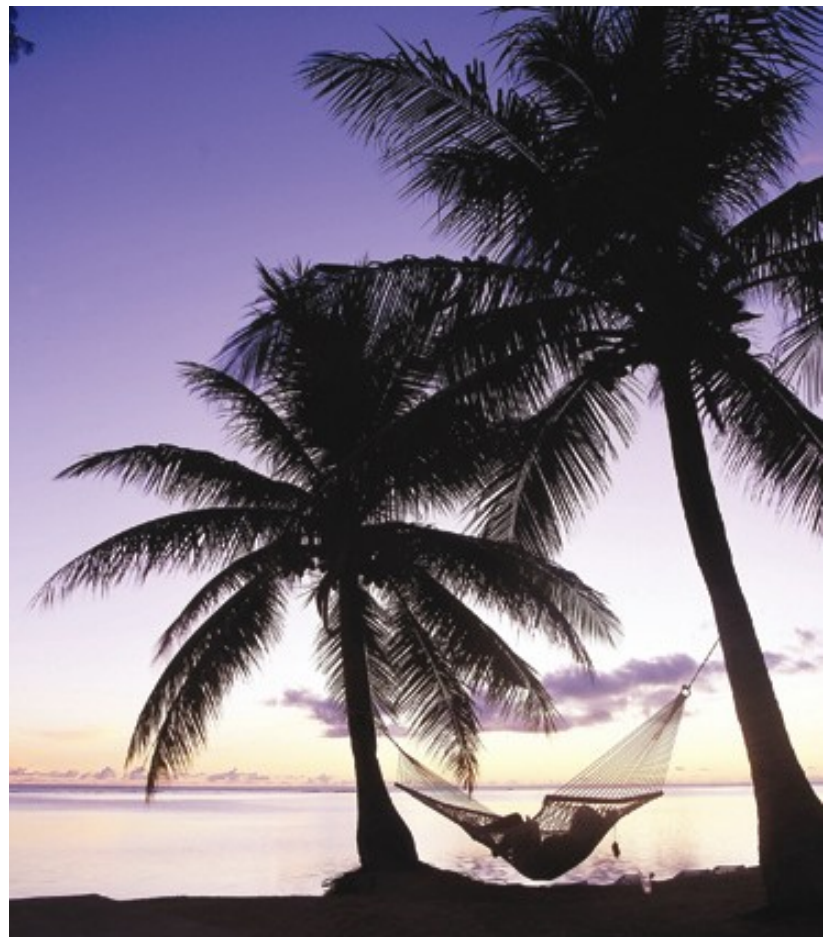
Internal organs also need support in times of stress, particularly the adrenal system. "Pantothenic acid, a B vitamin, is the best support for the adrenals," she says. "It balances out the cortisol." Gittleman's recommendation: 500 mg, three times a day.

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.

# Magical Mango

Shelly Burns

Treating yourself to a mango is a perfect way to add some sunshine to your routine.

A mango is more than just a sweet, delicious fruit. It has properties beneficial to skin, including water-soluble vitamins like B2, B3, B6, folic acid (B9), and C. Mango is also a good source of beta-carotene and vitamin A.

Vitamin B complex delays skin's aging process. B vitamins provide a healthy glow, increased tone, and hydrated cells. The anti-inflammatory properties in B3 help skin retain moisture, alleviating dryness and irritation.

Vitamin C protects against the DNA damage that leads to skin cancer. This powerful antioxidant reduces the wrinkling effects of free radical damage, and combats other signs of aging by strengthening collagen and elastin.

Beta-carotene gives mango its wonderful orange color and has an important role

in protecting our skin's DNA. Dry, flaky skin can be remedied with the vitamin A derived from beta-carotene, which is important for repairing and maintaining healthy skin. Vitamin A has also been shown to help reduce and clear acne breakouts.

Other beneficial nutrients include magnesium, phosphorus, silica, sulfur, and vitamin E, which play a role in strengthening the connective tissue in our body, including skin, bone, hair, nails, and muscle.

Mango is not just beneficial to skin. Its nutrients reduce high blood pressure, the risk of stroke, and the chance of contracting heart disease. Mango also contains approximately 20 percent of the recommended dietary intake of fiber and enzymes, which promote healthy digestion.

Mango is especially helpful for long, dry winters, but you can enjoy it at any time of year. It will help maintain smooth skin and a healthy glow.



Mango offers a variety of health benefits

# Try This Breathing Exercise

Anne Williams

Do you ever find yourself unconsciously holding your breath when you're tense? This can cause tension to build in your body and may let the chest collapse, leading to misalignment.

Proper breathing provides oxygen to the muscles and body, helps you stay relaxed and centered, and even helps you maintain correct body alignment throughout your day.

You can also use breathwork as part of a stress-reduction program by following this progressive relaxation exercise.

1. Begin by lying in a comfortable position without crossing your arms or legs, and focus on your breathing to create a slow, deep pattern. Inhale through your nose while counting to 10 and expanding your abdomen. Hold the breath for one second, and exhale through your nose on the count of 10. Inhale and exhale in this pattern five times.

2. Beginning with your head, tense your facial muscles as tightly as possible and count to five. Release the muscles

completely, and sense the muscles feeling heavy and still. Work down your entire body, tensing muscle groups and then relaxing them. After the head, move to the neck, chest, arms and hands, abdomen, back, thighs and gluteals, lower legs, and feet.

3. After relaxing each set of muscles, mentally scan your body for any areas of remaining tension and ask those areas to relax completely.

4. Repeat the slow breathing exercise.

5. Gently begin to move your body to come out of the deeply relaxed state.

Try using progressive relaxation directly before or after your sessions, directly before bed, or at any time during the day as a pick-me-up. Focus on taking full, deep, even, rhythmic breaths. With a little practice, you can become more aware of your own breathing patterns and use breathwork effectively as you move throughout your day.

*Throughout history 'tender loving care' has uniformly been recognized as a valuable element in healing.*

-Larry Dossey

A SPECIAL NOTE FROM LORI:

What is Self-Care? I tell my clients all the time---you can't take care of others unless you take care of yourself. Too often we try to be everything to everyone and put ourselves last. Practicing self-care is not selfish; it is a necessity. It improves our immunity, increases positive thinking, decreases stress, depression, and other emotional health issues. Throughout the day, BREATHE, take some small breaks, drink plenty of water to hydrate your body and your skin (the largest organ), eat nutritious foods and relax your mind before bedtime so that you get restful sleep. It's okay to take some "me time". Schedule that facial and take care of your skin. As the article says, "Your Face Says It All". Allow me to rejuvenate your skin and spirit with some wonderful enzymes, a topical mango rich mask, along with peaceful relaxation. Joy will replace stress, your skin will reflect revitalization, and you will be up to the tasks of the day.

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MEMBER

