

Gut Health & Your Skin

Posted by Zanna Taeni on 18th May 2022



Most of us have heard of the gut-brain connection. However, did you know that your ability to digest the food you eat can also affect the health of your skin?

The main culprits include:

- Stress
- Food allergies
- Alcohol
- Medications (especially antibiotics)
- Food additives and artificial colouring
- Food poisoning
- Diets low in fibre/high in sugar
- Long-term overgrowth of bacteria in the small intestine (aka SIBO).

When the gut gets irritated and inflamed, the nerves that permeate the digestive tract trigger an alarm. The body responds by ramping up the stress response and supercharging the immune system to help prepare the body to fight the attack on the gut.

Another consequence of this irritation is the loss of the tight barrier that typically keeps unwanted gut contents out of circulation. As a result, bacteria and other micro-organisms can enter along with food, which sets the stage for poor immune function, leading to whole-body inflammation.



What is the gut-skin connection?

Studies have shown that issues in any of the organs of your digestive tract can often lead to skin inflammation. This may manifest as blemishes, pimples, acne, eczema, psoriasis or rosacea on various parts of your face or body, depending on the main organs struggling.

The gut helps to both assimilate nutrients and eliminate toxins. However, these nutrients may be displaced and not correctly absorbed if you're not digesting well, and you may even reabsorb harmful metabolites from the gut back into circulation.

In turn, stress and systemic inflammation can impair our skin's integrity and protective role, causing it to produce less of the naturally occurring anti-bacterial proteins it typically makes as a first-line defence.

People with a healthier gut microbiota may have a better fatty acid profile in their skin, leaving it more hydrated and protected. If you typically get acne on the forehead, cheeks or mouth, this could be a sign of poor gut function.



What causes poor gut health?

The gut provides a barrier between the contents of your intestinal tract and the rest of you. Intestinal permeability (aka “leaky gut”) is where anything that affects the gut lining can cause it to become irritated and lead to whole-body inflammation.

How to heal your gut (and your skin!)

- Remove refined and hydrogenated oils from the diet, including soybean, canola, sunflower, safflower, cottonseed, corn and vegetable oil.
- Substitute these for the following: olive oil or ghee for cooking, coconut oil for baking and raw treats and a combination of olive oil and either flaxseed, hemp seed, avocado or macadamia oil over salads.
- Remove foods that feed yeast and candida (commonly indicated by a white coating on the tongue), present in sugar, refined grains and dairy.
- Consume a diet rich in bone broth and collagen. Foods that support your body’s collagen production are those high in vitamin C – camu camu, acerola cherry and Davidson’s plum powders.
- Make a conscious effort to reduce any emotional stress and build peace in your life – have lunch with a friend, take a walk, read a book or try meditation.

There is truth in the saying “you are what you eat”, but we could also take this one step further by realising “you are how you feel”. In other words, what you are telling yourself influences the state of your entire body.

It’s essential to care for your skin from the inside out. Feeding your body the right food matters, but so too does feeding your mind the right thoughts. Try to do a little of both and see if you notice healthier-looking skin.

