We know a healthy gut can lead to healthy skin, and probiotics are an important component of both! Probiotics are live bacteria that benefit the health of the digestive tract, which when compromised can cause excessive inflammation that affects the immune system. This may lead to conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), Crohn’s disease and allergies, to name a few. Probiotics are the good bacteria that help keep the gut healthy by creating a “barrier” that reduces inflammation and assists with the colonization of health-boosting microorganisms.
Inflammation of the gut can result from many factors, including stress and a high intake of processed food. Lack of dietary fiber can also slow digestion, making the bacteria in the gut unhealthy. This can lead to what is known as “leaky gut syndrome,” in which toxins are released into the bloodstream, causing inflammation throughout the body.

TARGETS SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

There is a link between inflammation of the gut and various skin conditions, as those prone to acne, rosacea and other skin ailments may experience flare-ups and worsening of the symptoms associated with these conditions due to gut issues. Probiotics have been shown to reduce inflammation internally, actually reducing bad bacteria that trigger these common skin conditions.

- Acne

Studies from Italy, Russia and Korea have found that probiotics from food or supplements used in conjunction with standard acne treatments may increase the rate of acne clearing and worsening of the symptoms associated with these conditions due to gut issues. Probiotics have been shown to reduce inflammation internally, actually reducing bad bacteria that trigger these common skin conditions.

- Rosacea

Probiotic extracts used in conjunction with medication can reduce the redness seen in rosacea and also improve and strengthen the skin barrier to decrease stinging, burning and dryness.

- Eczema

Finnish researchers looked at pregnant women who took probiotic supplements (containing lactobacillushamnosus GG) for two to four weeks before giving birth, and also after delivery if they were breast-feeding, or added the bacteria to infant formula for at least six months. They found that the probiotics reduced the odds of eczema in babies who had strong family histories of the itchy skin condition until at least age two and possibly longer.

TYPES OF PROBIOTICS

For years, mega-doses of antibiotics have been prescribed for skin conditions prone to inflammatory symptoms in an effort to reduce bacteria levels. However, probiotics (the opposite of antibiotics) have been shown to increase healthy bacteria levels, decrease lipopolysaccharides, improve intestinal barrier function and reduce inflammation. When used in conjunction with antibiotics, probiotics may improve results and reduce some of the side effects caused by antibiotics alone. The following probiotics offer some of the most promising benefits in reducing inflammatory skin conditions:

- Lactobacillus is the most common probiotic. It can be found naturally in yogurt and other fermented foods. Different strains can help with inflammation of the intestines and diarrhea as well as help those who are lactose intolerant.

- L. Acidophilus provides antibacterial and anti-fungal benefits and is shown to treat scaly skin and rashes accompanied by inflammation. It may be found in yogurt, soy and daily supplement form.

- B. Longum, like L. Acidophilus, is one of the most common types of bacteria found in the digestive tract. It helps maintain the integrity of the gut wall and is a particularly active scavenger of toxins.

- Bifidobacterium can also be found in some dairy products and may help to ease the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome.

These “good” bacteria have been shown to act as a natural protective shield against bad bacteria and parasites, which are triggers for acne and rosacea. The probiotic provokes an immune reaction to counter the threat and antimicrobial properties can kill bad bacteria. Ongoing research is being done to determine which probiotics are most beneficial in this fight. Probiotics also offer a calming effect; they calm parts of the cell that may react to the presence of bad bacteria, especially the type that promote acne and rosacea.

HEALTH FROM THE INSIDE OUT

While limiting intake of simple carbohydrates and other foods may help reduce inflammatory conditions, a daily dose of probiotics is key for the restoration of healthy bacteria in the digestive tract. Many oral supplements are also available, but some caplet forms are destroyed by acid in the stomach before they ever reach the intestines. Delivery of these actives is key to their efficacy. Reaching the intestines alive is the only way to ensure that the true benefits of probiotics are delivered.

TOPICAL USE

In addition to the dietary benefits of probiotics, ongoing studies are showing that when applied topically, they may also improve and prevent signs of aging due to the following benefits:

- Nutritive and protective effect against environmental influences.
- Reduces enzymes that trigger inflammation and the degradation of collagen and elastin due to UV exposure.
- Relaxes, stress reducing effect.
- UV exposure and stress trigger a nerve growth factor (NGF). Probiotics show promise in calming inflammation triggered by NGF and help to rebalance stressed skin.

PROBIOTICS HAVE BEEN SHOWN TO REDUCE INFLAMMATION INTERNALLY.
Pros and Cons of Colon Hydrotherapy

A practice that likely began in ancient Egypt, colon hydrotherapy (also known as colonics, colon cleansing and colon irrigation) has evolved over thousands of years. Believed to be a gift from the gods, it was then practiced in a river using a hollow reed to induce flowing water into the rectum. Ancient Babylonian, Hindu and Roman writings also mention the use of enemas and Greek physician Hippocrates was recorded as using it for fever therapy.

Today, colon hydrotherapy has come a long way from sticks and river water. The practice is endorsed by a slew of celebrities including Jennifer Aniston, Madonna, Leonardo DiCaprio, Janet Jackson, Sylvester Stallone and dozens more. Its implementation in spas and wellness centers has garnered loyal followers, as clients claim to feel lighter, more energized and relieved of constipation. Other named benefits include a clear complexion, faster metabolism and improved immune system, among others.

By Raquel Levy

Active types of probiotics can be attained through many food sources. The highest and most active content of probiotics is found in yogurt with live active cultures or kefir (a fermented milk drink). Other good sources include:

- Miso soup
- Sauerkraut
- Kombucha tea

There are two important questions we must answer that currently present hurdles for probiotics and skin care:

1. Are there more advantages from the live version of probiotics rather than lysetes?
2. Is it possible to formulate skin care products with live organisms and retain their efficacy?

Regardless of these unanswered questions, one thing is certain: With all of the new technologically advanced delivery systems available today, the use of probiotics in skin care is destined for continued growth.

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References


SUCCESSFUL DELIVERY

The challenge now is to understand how we can stabilize probiotics in skin care. Lysetes (cell fragments), which are not actual live organisms, have shown some possibility in topical products as well, although more research must be conducted to verify long-term efficacy.

There are two important questions we must answer that currently present hurdles for probiotics and skin care:

- Stabilization of the immune system.
- UV-induced immunosuppression unbalances immunological protection of the skin.

Pros and Cons of Colon Hydrotherapy

TOXIN FLUSH OUT

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