

Ask the EXPERTS



My skin is feeling very dry and irritated – can you advise how to improve it and recommend a healthy skincare routine?

Nelly Bennett suggested: You may need to modify your skincare routine to help with dryness and discomfort. A good starting point is to try to identify what parts of your existing routine may be exacerbating these conditions. For example, avoid petrochemicals and fragrant-loaded cleansers, emollients and wipes (keep away from SLS, perfumes, parabens, phthalates and mineral oils). Watch out for hidden irritants, such as chemicals, fragrances in detergents and dyes in clothing. These can cause skin irritation, dryness, chafing, and rashes. I would recommend the following tips and building in more gentle and natural products into your routine to improve the dryness and the overall long-term health of your skin. Wash in moderation; dry skin and dermatitis generally hate water and over washing can dry the skin. Do not have water too hot and do not soak in the bath for long periods. Short tepid showers are best and be careful to pat dry and never rub delicate areas. I often recommend only showering once or twice a week and not every day if the skin is bad. If there are any particular bad patches, try and keep these out of the water wherever possible. The quality and the ingredients of your skincare products are very important. This is why I recommend products with a high content of natural active ingredients for real therapeutic benefit. Ideally select products with calendula, which reduces inflammation and soothes the skin, active manuka honey, which has antibacterial, soothing and healing properties, and aloe vera, which stimulates cell regeneration, has antibacterial, wound healing properties and acts as a potent emollient.



FIGHT THE FATIGUE by Dr Max Gowland

Why can fatigue become problematic as we get older?

In consumer research on over 1,000 over 50s, we found that the vast majority complained about having low energy levels throughout the day, so this is a common but perfectly normal part of ageing. In essence, our metabolic rate slows so this, combined with the fact that older adults are probably more sedentary than when they were young, can cause unwanted fatigue. It is also well known that the mitochondria which exist in all our cells, as mini generators of our energy (in the form of ATP), also decline and lose efficiency too due to gradual attack by many free radicals, causing oxidative stress. The main issue with fatigue is the vicious circle, where muscle mass and strength is lost initially, especially in older adults, at an alarming rate. This then, in combination with stiff joints, causes additional sedentary behaviour, leading to yet more decline of muscle strength and so on.

What are the most common dietary and lifestyle factors that can contribute?

Though counter-intuitive perhaps, exercise is always the best tonic to inject renewed vitality and energy into our lifestyle. This alone helps stimulate and grow new mitochondria for a start. In addition, a healthy, well balanced diet, full of micronutrient dense foods, will go a long way in helping to fill those nutritional gaps, which, if unchecked, will lead to continued

fatigue problems. Many of the vitamins and also minerals too all contribute to different parts of the energy creating biochemistries within our metabolism and we know from many food intake and nutrition surveys that the vast majority of the over 50s are really not getting sufficient quantities of those key micronutrients into their daily diet. This is fact.

Can you recommend a plan to help people overcome fatigue in terms of diet, supplements and lifestyle?

In addition to exercise, sleep must feature as a much-needed and obvious requirement. Failing to get enough sleep can have quite an unhealthy effect on our overall health, affecting a multitude of health areas. So, getting those eight hours should feature as part of an energy boosting plan. Of course, using a well formulated supplement to fight fatigue will help ensure that you get all the required vitamins and minerals that are involved in the energy process. Coenzyme Q10 is another well-known antioxidant nutrient that some are failing to glean from their diets, especially if they are vegetarian, so supplementation with CoQ10 is also worth a try. A complete fatigue focused formulation too will always be superior to a single nutrient approach, as it is quite possible that you will be lacking not just one, but quite a few key nutrients based on the UK food intake data, so it's better to cover all bases.

The naturopathic advisor



Natural Lifestyle has teamed up with experts at CNM (College of Naturopathic Medicine) to answer some of your burning health questions. This issue, you asked:



Q What is our 'microbiome', and 'good' and 'bad' bacteria?

Our 'microbiome' refers to the trillions of types of bacterial cells that live in our bodies. Our personal microbiome is totally unique, depending on our genetics, habits and environment and the interplay between these. Our microbiome is intricately linked to our health and immunity in both positive and negative ways.

Different bacterial colonies are being linked with a host of diseases and disorders, from cancer, to cardiovascular disease, allergies,

depression, obesity and more.

'Good' bacteria or 'probiotics' are defined as live microorganisms which can provide benefits to human health. 'Bad' bacteria are those which are not good for our health and wellness. Keeping up high levels of the good bacteria is desirable so that the bad ones can't take hold.

'Prebiotics' are foods which nourish our probiotics. They are components of foods that are indigestible to us, but the bacteria in our gut thrive on them. 'Good' bacteria seem to flourish more than the 'bad' with the introduction of prebiotics.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR MICROBIOME

For a more positive bacterial profile:

- Use eco-friendly products and

natural cleaners, such as vinegar and baking soda, rather than harsh disinfectants.

- Don't eat artificial sweeteners – they are toxic to gut bacteria.
- Only take antibiotics when absolutely necessary – both good and bad bacteria are affected by antibiotics.
- Add 'live' or 'living' fermented foods to your diet, look for those key words.
- Make your own fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kombucha and kefir.
- Eat prebiotics, such as garlic, asparagus, onions, leeks, bananas, artichokes, blackberries, and seaweed.
- Red meat and saturated fat alter the microbiome unfavourably, choose vegetable proteins instead, such as legumes, nuts and seeds.
- Where possible, choose organic

food to minimise disruptive chemicals such as pesticides, which can damage our internal flora.

- Don't binge drink – excessive alcohol is poison to the gut.
- If using a probiotic, look for products with billions of colony forming units. With the frequent exception of *Saccharomyces boulardii*, probiotics are named by their genus, species and strain, for example, *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* GG. There are vast differences between the effectiveness and properties of different strains, so enlist the help of a naturopath for support and advice.

YOUR EXPERT
Your question has been answered by Naturopath, Gemma Hurditch, for CNM. For information on CNM training in a range of natural health therapies, visit www.naturopathy-uk.com

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