



THE LINK BETWEEN SKIN AND LIFESTYLE

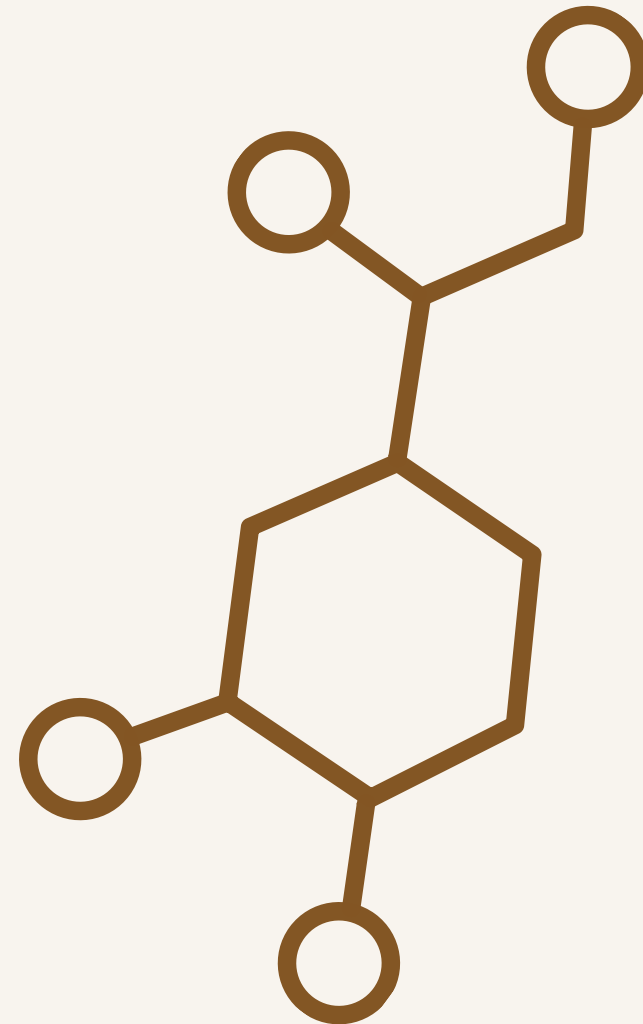
OUR LIFESTYLE HABITS INFLUENCE OUR SKIN FAR MORE THAN WE OFTEN REALISE.

The body isn't a collection of separate systems, it's one intelligent network, constantly communicating through hormones, neurotransmitters, and subtle energetic signals. Every choice we make, how we sleep, eat, move, and manage stress, affects that internal communication and, ultimately, the way our skin functions and appears.

This guide will explore lifestyle factors that shape not only your skin health but also your nervous system and overall vitality. Because true skin health isn't achieved by targeting the surface, it's about creating homeostasis throughout the entire body. Some sections may not seem directly "skin-related," but trust that everything is connected. When we bring the body back into balance, the skin naturally follows.

HORMONES - OUR SILENT INFLUENCERS

Hormones are your body's internal messengers, constantly shaping your mood, metabolism, and yes, the way your skin behaves. When they're balanced, skin feels hydrated, calm, and resilient. When they're not, your skin will tell you before your bloodwork does.



THE MAIN PLAYERS



OESTROGEN

Supports collagen, elasticity, and hydration. When oestrogen dips (pre-period or perimenopause), skin can feel drier, thinner, and more reactive.

CORTISOL

A stress hormone. Short bursts help you adapt, but chronic elevation fuels inflammation, slows healing, and breaks down collagen.

TESTOSTERONE

Important for skin thickness and libido, but too much overstimulates oil glands, leading to congestion and jawline acne.

INSULIN

Drives how your body manages blood sugar. High insulin (from sugar spikes or stress) triggers inflammation and excess sebum.

PROGESTERONE

Calming and anti-inflammatory in the right amount. But when it spikes, oil production and puffiness can increase, often behind those mid-cycle breakouts.

PROLACTIN

Best known for its role in breastfeeding, but even small elevations (from stress or poor sleep) can disrupt oestrogen and progesterone balance, leading to dryness, congestion, and hormonal sensitivity.

THYROID

The thermostat for your metabolism. Low thyroid = dull, dry, sluggish skin. Overactive thyroid = flushed, sensitive skin.

DHEA

A “youth-supporting” hormone that declines with age. It’s the precursor to oestrogen and testosterone, and healthy DHEA levels keep skin firm, hydrated, and resilient. Low levels can mean thinner, drier, more fragile skin, it can also tell us a lot about our stress levels.

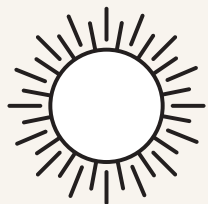
HORMONES AND SKIN HEALTH ARE DEEPLY INTERCONNECTED. A STABLE HORMONAL RHYTHM, SUPPORTED THROUGH BALANCED NUTRITION, RESTORATIVE SLEEP, MOVEMENT, AND STRESS REGULATION, IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL TREATMENTS YOU CAN INVEST IN.



SLEEP, REM & CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS

Sleep is much more than rest, it's when your body actively repairs, regenerates, and rebalances. Every night, your internal clock, also known as our circadian rhythm, tells your body when to protect, restore, and reset.





During the day, cortisol rises naturally to keep you alert, while your skin is in protection mode, defending against environmental stressors like UV light and pollution. As evening falls, cortisol drops and melatonin rises, signalling the body and skin to enter repair mode. Blood flow increases, collagen and antioxidant activity peak, and the skin starts its nightly restoration. This is why consistent, quality sleep is so visible on the skin, circulation improves, repair accelerates, and inflammation is calmed.



Every night, your internal clock, also known as our circadian rhythm, tells your body when to protect, restore, and reset. When this rhythm runs smoothly, hormones, energy levels, and skin function are all in sync. When it's disrupted, usually from irregular bedtimes, late-night screens, or stress, skin repair slows, sensitivity can increase, and overall radiance is harder to maintain.





SLEEP ITSELF ISN'T UNIFORM - YOUR BODY MOVES THROUGH MULTIPLE STAGES, EACH WITH DISTINCT BENEFITS FOR THE SKIN.

LIGHT SLEEP

Light sleep is when the body begins to wind down, lowering temperature and boosting lymphatic flow to help clear waste.

DEEP SLEEP

Deep sleep is the main repair phase, growth hormone surges, stimulating collagen production, tissue regeneration, and cellular renewal.

REM SLEEP

Finally, REM sleep supports emotional balance and nervous system reset, helping regulate stress hormones like cortisol, which in turn affects skin calmness and resilience.

Of course, life isn't always perfect. Shift work, stress, parenting, and unpredictable routines can disrupt your circadian rhythm. That doesn't mean your skin is doomed, it just changes how your body repairs itself. Even when sleep is fragmented, short naps, a consistent wind-down routine, natural light exposure during the day, and stress management practices can all help support your skin's repair processes.

Chronic sleep disruption can shorten repair windows, slow collagen production, weaken barrier function, and increase inflammation. But small, consistent strategies go a long way. Sleep and hormones are deeply interconnected, supporting one supports the other, and both show up on your skin.



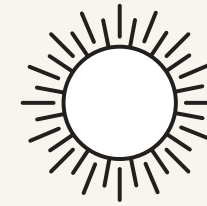
TOP TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP



Aim for 7–9 hours where possible to allow full cycles through deep and REM sleep.



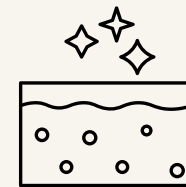
Keep a consistent wind-down routine, even if your bedtime varies.



Use natural light exposure during the day to anchor your circadian rhythm.



Short naps or recovery sleep still support repair if nights are fragmented.

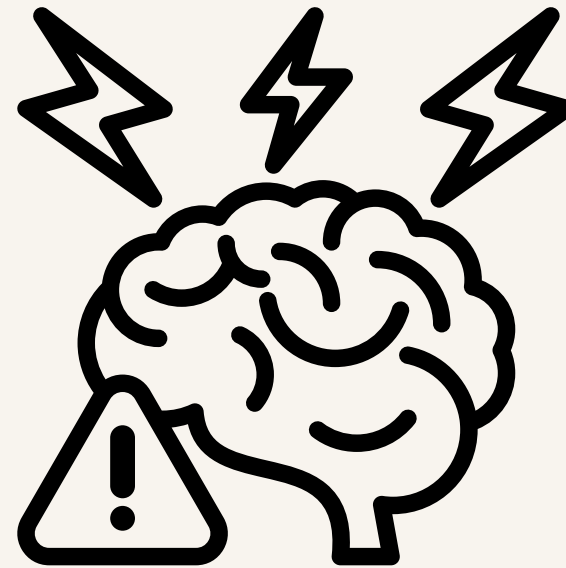


Remember, your skin is resilient, small intentional habits make a real difference.

STRESS & THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

“Your body doesn’t know the difference between stressing over forgetting to put the bins out and being chased by a tiger.”

In a chronic state of ‘fight or flight,’ it reacts the same way every time, hormones surge, blood flow shifts, and skin function can be affected.



MANY PEOPLE DON'T REALISED HOW MUCH STRESS THEY'RE UNDER

Chronic stress doesn't always look like panic or overwhelm, it can show up as subtle, persistent states of anxiety, overthinking, or constant worrying. Even small triggers, a looming deadline, traffic, or minor daily pressures, activate the sympathetic nervous system in the same way as major stressors.

Over time, these repeated activations create a chronic stress undertone, subtly influencing hormone balance, sleep quality, and skin repair. Essentially, the body is in a near-constant state of alert, even if we aren't consciously aware of it.

**DID YOU KNOW? UP TO
95% OF SEROTONIN
(YOUR HAPPY HORMONE)
IS MADE IN YOUR GUT!**



**EARLY LIFE EXPERIENCES,
INCLUDING CHILDHOOD TRAUMA OR
PROLONGED STRESS, CAN HAVE A
LASTING IMPACT ON THE NERVOUS
SYSTEM.**

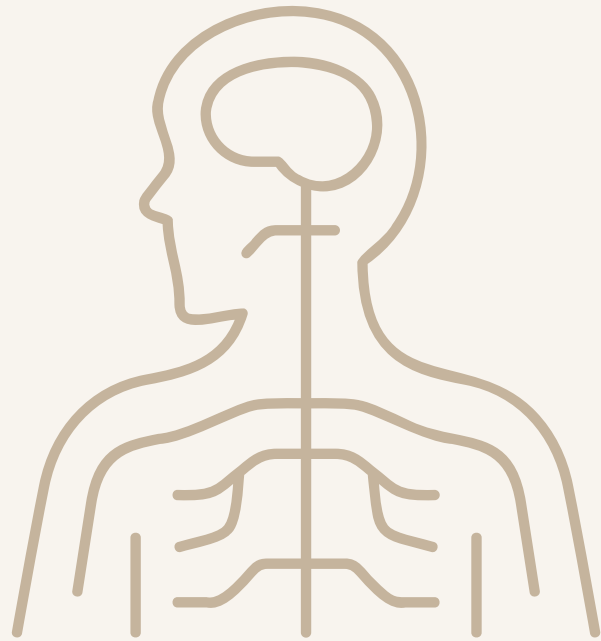
When the body is repeatedly exposed to stress during development, it can become more sensitive or “primed,” making it easier for inflammation to persist and for skin repair to slow down later in life. This doesn’t mean the damage is permanent, it’s about understanding how the nervous system, mind, and gut communicate with each other. The mind-gut-skin connection means that mental and emotional patterns can influence digestion, inflammation, and overall skin health.

STRESS ISN'T JUST A MENTAL STATE.

**IT'S A PHYSICAL RESPONSE THAT
AFFECTS EVERY PART OF THE BODY,
INCLUDING YOUR SKIN.**

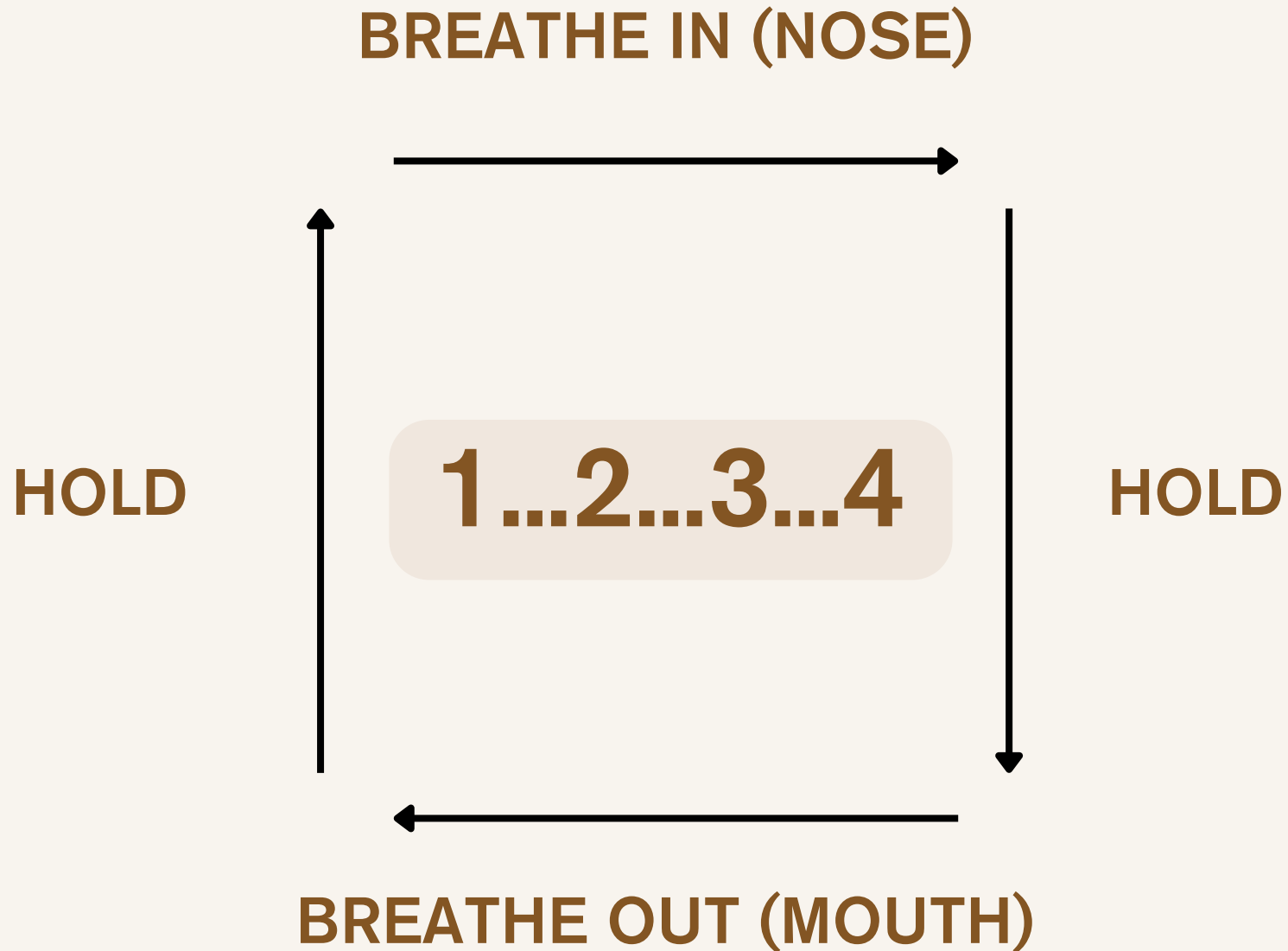
When we experience stress, the nervous system signals the release of hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. In the short term, these are protective, helping the body respond to immediate challenges. But when stress is chronic, these signals become constant, and the effects on skin and overall health accumulate.

YOUR SKIN IS DIRECTLY INFLUENCED BY THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.



Blood flow, immune response, and barrier function are all controlled in part by neural signals. When the sympathetic (“fight or flight”) branch dominates, inflammation can increase, repair slows, and sensitivity rises. Conversely, activating the parasympathetic (“rest and digest”) system supports healing, hydration, and resilience. This is why practices that calm the nervous system such as slow breathing, meditation, gentle movement, or even time outdoors, are often reflected in calmer, healthier skin.

THE BOX BREATHING METHOD



STRESS ALSO INTERACTS CLOSELY WITH HORMONES AND SLEEP

Elevated cortisol can disrupt circadian rhythm, reduce deep and REM sleep, and alter hormone balance. This creates a feedback loop: poor sleep makes the nervous system more reactive, which can further disturb hormones, and the cycle continues.

Recognising these connections is key: supporting the nervous system isn't just about feeling calm, it's about giving the skin the environment it needs to repair and thrive.

THE GOAL ISN'T PERFECTION

Of course, life isn't always controllable, deadlines, parenting, or unexpected challenges can spike stress. The goal isn't perfection, it's management. Small, consistent habits that activate the parasympathetic system, even for a few minutes a day, have measurable effects on skin, mood, and hormone balance. Over time, these strategies strengthen resilience, helping your mind, body and skin adapt rather than react.

Short-term stress is normal; chronic stress is what affects skin and health.

Stress doesn't always feel obvious, constant low-level anxiety, overthinking, or worry all count.

Seek counselling / a form of therapy if required.

Even minor daily triggers can activate the sympathetic nervous system and impact skin and overall health.

Early life stress or trauma can prime the nervous system, influencing inflammation and repair into adulthood.

Mental and emotional patterns connect with the gut and skin, the mind-gut-skin connection is real.

Stress impacts hormones and sleep, supporting one helps the others.

Even brief, intentional pauses in your day can make a meaningful difference for skin and overall health.

Techniques that calm the nervous system (breathing, meditation, gentle movement) support repair and resilience.

DAILY ROUTINES FOR SKIN HEALTH

Small, consistent habits have an outsized impact on your skin and overall wellbeing. The way you start and end your day sets the tone for hormone balance, nervous system regulation, and circadian rhythm.

MORNING ROUTINES:

- Avoid immediately reaching for your phone. Jumping into emails or social media triggers stress and cortisol surges.
- Gentle movement such as a morning walk, hydration, or a mindful ritual signals your nervous system to wake calmly and sets a foundation for balanced hormone levels.

EVENING ROUTINES:

- Limit screen exposure at least 30–60 minutes before bed. Blue light disrupts melatonin production and delays the sleep cycle, affecting repair, collagen production, and barrier recovery.
- A consistent wind-down routine, dim lights, gentle stretching, skincare, or reading, helps the nervous system switch into parasympathetic “rest and repair” mode.

Consistency over perfection is key. Even small adjustments, like keeping phones out of reach in the bedroom, drinking water first thing in the morning, going for a morning walk, or doing a few minutes of deep breathing at night, can support the skin’s repair cycles, reduce stress, and keep hormones on track.

IF YOU STRUGGLE TO WAKE UP IN THE MORNING, LIKE I DID, A SUNRISE LAMP SUCH AS THE LUMI MIMICS THE NATURAL SUNRISE, GENTLY CUEING YOUR BODY TO WAKE BY REGULATING CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS, SUPPORTING THE MORNING CORTISOL SURGE, IMPROVING ALERTNESS AND MOOD, AND OPTIMISING THE BODY'S NATURAL REPAIR AND REGENERATION CYCLES, INCLUDING SKIN RECOVERY!



GENTLE MOVEMENT

EXERCISE IS VITAL FOR OVERALL HEALTH, STRESS REGULATION, AND CIRCULATION, ALL OF WHICH BENEFIT THE SKIN. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO INFLAMMATORY SKIN CONDITIONS, MORE ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER.

Over-exercising or doing frequent high-intensity workouts can actually trigger stress responses, elevate cortisol, and worsen inflammation, slowing the skin's repair. For most people with sensitive or inflamed skin, lower-intensity steady-state exercise (LISS) such as walking, pilates, gentle weight resistance, gentle cycling, or yoga, is often better tolerated and supports circulation, lymphatic drainage, and hormone balance without overloading the nervous system.

High-impact or HIIT sessions don't need to be completely avoided, but reducing them to once or twice a week can help prevent flare-ups while still maintaining fitness and cardiovascular benefits.

The goal is to move in a way that supports your body, skin, and overall wellbeing, not to push through at the expense of repair and recovery.

MY FAVOURITE PLACES FOR REFORMER PILATES IN CHELTENHAM



COTSWOLDS PILATES CLUB

<https://www.cotswoldspilatesclub.co.uk/>

P.I.LATES

- A COLLECTIVE STUDIO -

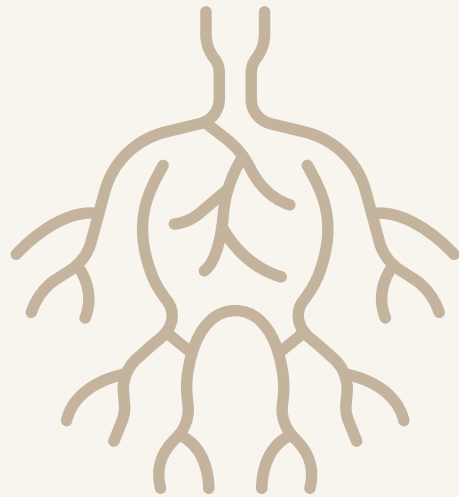


P.I.LATES STUDIO

<https://www.p-i-lates.com/>

YOUR BODY'S WASTE DISPOSAL

The lymphatic system is like your body's recycling and waste service, clearing away toxins, excess fluid, and waste from tissues. When it's flowing well, your skin, immunity, and overall health function at their best. Poor flow can contribute to puffiness, dullness, and slower repair. Remember, your skin is a detoxification organ and lymphatic drainage must be taken seriously if you want it to function at it's best!



If lymph flow slows, waste can build up, leading to puffiness, congestion, dullness, and slower skin repair. Chronic stagnation can even worsen inflammation, which is why sensitive or reactive skin sometimes feels “stuck” or sluggish.

Your lymphatic system is closely linked to your nervous system, circulation, and stress levels. High stress or chronic inflammation can slow lymph flow, while consistent, gentle practices boost it, helping your skin repair, detoxify, and glow.

HORMONES ALSO PLAY A KEY ROLE

Cortisol and other stress hormones can reduce lymph flow, increasing puffiness and inflammation. Oestrogen and progesterone affect water retention and tissue sensitivity, influencing how efficiently lymph moves. Even thyroid hormones impact circulation and metabolism, indirectly supporting lymphatic function. This means that when hormones fluctuate, due to stress, menstrual cycles, or other factors, lymphatic flow can be subtly affected, impacting skin hydration, repair, and radiance.

**THE
LYMPHATIC
SYSTEM ISN'T
JUST ABOUT
CLEARING
TOXINS, IT'S A
KEY PLAYER
IN YOUR
IMMUNE
DEFENSE!**

Lymph fluid carries immune cells, including lymphocytes, throughout the body, allowing them to detect and respond to infections, toxins, or damaged cells. As lymph moves through lymph nodes, these immune cells can identify threats and trigger the appropriate response, helping protect tissues, including the skin, from inflammation and infection.

If lymph flow is sluggish, immune cells move more slowly and waste can accumulate in tissues, making the body less efficient at responding to threats. This can lead to increased inflammation, slower healing, and greater susceptibility to irritation or flare-ups, which often shows up visibly in the skin as puffiness, congestion, or delayed repair.

YOUR SKIN GIVES VISIBLE SIGNALS WHEN LYMPH FLOW IS SLUGGISH:

PUFFY EYES

FLUID RETENTION

DULLNESS

CONGESTION

JAWLINE ACNE

Your lymph system is your bodies rubbish disposal, it clears out toxins, pathogens and waste - but it doesn't have a pump! That means YOU need to keep it flowing

So how can you do that?

MASSAGING THE LYMPH NODES

Massaging or “pumping” lymph nodes helps stimulate lymph flow, supporting detoxification, reducing puffiness, and improving skin health. The key is gentle pressure, the lymphatic system is delicate, and you don’t need deep or forceful movements (I have videos on my instagram!)

LOCATE MAJOR LYMPH NODES



Usually found in the neck, armpits and groin

MASSAGE TECHNIQUE



Use gentle, pumping, circular or sweeping motions toward the nodes.

FREQUENCY



1–2 minutes per area is enough. You can do this daily or a few times per week.

DRY BRUSHING

And its benefits ...

Dry brushing is an easy, effective way to stimulate lymphatic movement and support detoxification. Using a soft, natural bristle brush on dry skin before showering and after pumping the lymph nodes, you create gentle pressure that encourages lymph fluid to flow toward the lymph nodes, helping clear toxins and reduce fluid buildup. It also boosts circulation, exfoliates dead skin cells, and can leave the skin looking brighter and more radiant.



For best results, brush toward the heart, starting from the extremities (hands and feet) and moving in long, sweeping motions. You don't need to overdo it, a few minutes a day, a few times per week, is enough to support lymphatic flow, circulation, and skin health (of course, don't do this on your face)

- ✓ Dry brushing stimulates lymph flow and supports detoxification.
- ✓ Always brush toward the heart for optimal lymphatic drainage.
- ✓ Enhances circulation, exfoliation, and skin radiance.
- ✓ Gentle, consistent practice is more effective than intensity.

HABIT STACKING

Legs up the wall & LED Mask ...

Pairing legs up the wall with an LED mask (click here to purchase!) is a simple, powerful habit that boosts lymphatic drainage, reduces puffiness, and supports skin repair. Lying back with legs vertical encourages circulation, while the LED mask promotes collagen and cellular rejuvenation. Add deep breathing to relax your nervous system and enhance lymph flow. Just 5–10 minutes, 1–2 times a day creates a restorative ritual for glowing skin and overall wellbeing. **Habit stacking also means you're more likely to stick to these rituals!**



A FINAL NOTE:

Perfection isn't required every day, but if you're managing an inflammatory skin condition, consistency across all areas, sleep, stress, movement, and lifestyle, is key to seeing results. Even if your skin isn't currently reactive, these tips are designed to help you support your body and skin, guiding you toward a healthier and stronger version of yourself. Small, consistent habits really do add up over time, we've been accustomed to think of skin as a topical thing, but our body works in synergy!