

## Feeling stressed? It can show in your skin, hair and nails

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Credit: Estzer Miller on Pixabay

Stress is a part of life. Whether your stressors are small or large, they can impact both your mental and physical well-being. While we can't completely remove stress from our lives, board-certified dermatologists

can recommend mind body practices, also known as stress management techniques, which focus on your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs to help control stress and combat the negative effects it has on your body.

"Our brain and skin are intimately linked, and they communicate with each other. This means that when we experience [chronic stress](#) from work, relationships or current events, the skin is both a target and a source of stress hormones, which can make the skin more vulnerable to itch, inflammation, irritation, and infection," said board-certified dermatologist Keira Barr MD, FAAD. "When you understand how stress affects your body, you can more effectively incorporate mind body practices to help reduce your stress and improve your physical, mental and emotional well-being."

As the body's largest organ, the skin often reflects what's happening inside your body. Stress can cause increased inflammation, slow down wound healing, and negatively impact skin conditions. Your glands produce more oil when under stress, which can cause acne to worsen in people who are prone to outbreaks. Stress can also be a trigger for skin conditions like psoriasis and eczema, causing the conditions to flare-up.

Stress can have a large impact on how our skin ages. Stress hormones break down the collagen and elastin in skin and interfere with rejuvenation, which can speed up the aging process causing more fine lines and wrinkles.

The hair and its growth are also affected by stress by contributing to hair thinning and hair loss. While most stress-induced [hair loss](#) is temporary, it's important to address it quickly to prevent irreversible damage.

In addition to your skin and hair, Dr. Barr says that stress can have other impacts.

"Using mind body practices can help regulate your [stress response](#), which can reduce symptoms and side effects of cancer treatment and improve quality of life, which is linked to improving treatment and the skin condition itself," said Dr. Barr. "Learning how to manage your stress response is a very powerful addition to every skin care regimen."

Mind body practices are most effective when used in combination with other treatments. Examples of common mind body practices include:

- **Meditation:** A practice that involves focusing or clearing the mind that can help reduce [blood pressure](#) and symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- **Acupuncture:** This technique involves inserting thin needles into the skin to help relieve pain and ease stress. It may also help reduce the frequency of tension headaches and prevent migraine headaches.
- **Visualization:** A method that involves guiding the breath and directing the mind to picture images, ideas, symbols or use [positive thinking](#) to help achieve a desired result such as a feeling, mindset or a body sensation.
- **Breathwork:** This technique focuses on breathing exercises that are used specifically for breath control.
- **Tai chi or qigong:** A [martial arts](#) practice to help improve balance and reduce back pain.
- **Yoga:** A mind and body practice, which combines physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation. Yoga focuses on improving mental and [emotional health](#), sleep, and balance.

Dr. Barr notes that mind body techniques are not a one-size-fits-all approach. Everyone has a unique relationship to stress, and our perception and experience with stress determines how it impacts us and how we respond to different [mind](#) body techniques. Individuals should

use the techniques that work best for them.

"In order to take care of our skin, we need to take a much more holistic approach and look at all the factors that influence it," said Dr. Barr.

"Stress can be a contributing factor for more serious dermatologic conditions. If you're experiencing [stress](#) and it's affecting your [skin](#), hair or nails, make an appointment to see a board-certified dermatologist."

Provided by American Academy of Dermatology

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