How Stress Can Wreak Havoc on Your Hair and Skin

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Stress isn't just an annoying byproduct of everyday life: It's also a major health and beauty saboteur, thanks to its ability to hijack your healthy routines. Lack of sleep, dehydration, and junk food cravings (and, yes, splurges) often go hand-in-hand with feeling stressed out, and end up playing a major part in depleting your healthy glow—leaving you looking quite a bit worse for wear. No surprise, the same stress effects that can prove harmful to your body are also terrible for your hair and skin.

Sleep Deprivation
Stress can interrupt sleep patterns, and a good night's rest is vital for skin and body repair.

Coupled with stress, lack of sleep weakens the immune system and puts the body's chemicals out of whack, often leaving you with lackluster skin and dull eyes, says **Kathy Heshelow**, founder of Sublime Beauty.

Skin Irritants

Stress also causes you to release a special brand of stress hormones, which can trigger your body into channeling blood away from the skin toward muscles and other organs, says **Dr. David Bank**, dermatologist and author of *Beautiful Skin: Every Woman's Guide to Looking Her Best at Any Age* and founder of The Center For Dermatology, Cosmetic & Laser Surgery in Mt. Kisco, NY. If you're finding yourself under chronic stress, you're not only depriving your skin of crucial oxygen and nutrients, but you also may be aggravating skin conditions that are already present in your body, like acne or eczema.

Dryness

The negative effects of stress can present themselves on the skin with extreme dehydration that results in inflammation, hyperpigmentation, dullness and acne, says **Dr. Howard Murad**, a celebrity dermatologist and founder of Murad. Dr. Murad says that when you're stressed, the dead cell layer on the surface of the skin becomes thin and develops microscopic holes, which aren't able to provide sufficient defense against aging UV rays. Not only does stress inevitably cause breakouts on most skin types, but it also creates tiny perforations in cell membranes that lead to water leaking out of your cells, dehydrating the skin and ultimately causing fine lines, wrinkles, and a lackluster skin tone.

Sad Skin & Wrinkles

You may not notice the effects that stress has on your skin, hair and even nails, but it can actually discharge stress hormones that increase blood pressure, raise pulse rates and constrict blood vessels, which in turn redirect blood away from the skin towards other organs, says Dr. Bank. The result? Our muscles tense, our skin loses that rosy glow, and fine lines and wrinkles begin to form.

Hair Loss

As the blood vessels begin to constrict, hair follicles are deprived of the oxygen, minerals and vitamins it needs for healthy hair growth, says Dr. Bank. Vitamins are depleted under stress

because the body burns more energy and directs the vitamins and nutrients to those body parts that it needs for survival like the heart, lungs and brain. Thus, the scalp does not get the benefit of these essential nutrients, and hair loss may result.

"Over the years it has become easy to spot clients who are dealing with a lot it stress," says **Damian Santiago**, co-owner of Mizu New York Salon. Signs like hair loss, hair thinning, and an over all lack of shine and luster are common. In extreme cases, ailments such as Alopecia and Psoriasis start to arise—both of whcih contribute to weak and fragile hair that breaks easily.

Destructive Nervous Habits

Sometimes, severe stress can lead to formation of nasty habits like hair twirling or twisting, or nail biting, which become almost subconscious, says dermatologist**Dr. Rebecca Kazin**. All that twisting can result in chronic trauma to the hair in some areas, leading to broken hair and even hair loss. The only way to fix it? Target the underlying cause of the stress and address it!