

# THE EFFECTS OF STRESS ON SKIN



The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) defines stress—an unfortunate feeling we all experience at some point in our lives—as “the brain's response to any demand.” NIMH notes that while many things can trigger this response, the most common denominator is change. Whether it’s the birth of a child, a new job, a breakup, or a more traumatic change like the loss of a loved one, stress takes a serious toll on our bodies and minds. When stress is constant, it can cause numerous negative side effects, such as lower immune system and sleepless nights.

## The Stress Effect

While we’re all aware of the emotional, physical, and mental affects of stress, we wanted to learn more about how it can affect our skin. We chatted with Dr. Rebecca Kazin, a board certified dermatologist at the Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery, to learn more about the toll both long-and short-term stress can take on our body’s largest organ.

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Kazin says that chronic, low-level stress can lead to poor sleep and a weakened immune system. “When you’re run down, your skin reflects that. It’s not as healthy, not as shiny,” she says. These conditions are often exacerbated due to stress-induced skin care neglect, meaning that your stress-related breakouts could be due to a lack of care, and not the stress itself.

“Generally, stress worsens whatever condition you already have,” Kazin says. This has been proven true, according to the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), when it comes to chronic, inflammatory skin conditions including psoriasis, acne, and rosacea.

## **What You Can Do**

While we often can’t stop the factors that trigger our stress, Dr. Kazin does recommend a few things for coping with stress in order to minimize its affect on the skin. “With age you realize that your body doesn’t bounce back like it used to,” she says, so stressful life experiences can take a larger toll overall. “Instead of trying to fix it, prevent it for the long term.”