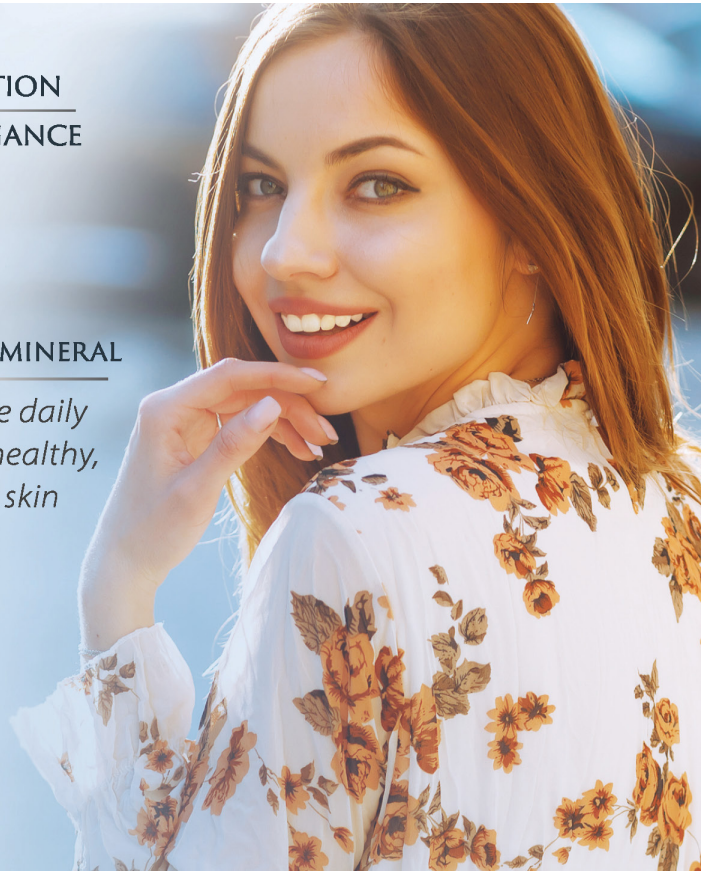


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Body Sense

A public education magazine brought to you by ABMP

spring 2021

Spring Detox

Ayurvedic Ways to
Improve Balance in
Your Body and Mind

Upper Back Pain

Massage After Vaccine

Realign With Nature
and Your Core

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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I'm Ready. Are You?

This past year has defied time. I don't know about you, but this has been the longest year I've known, yet the shortest on memories.

While on one hand my pandemic fog-filled brain watched time trudge through the curves, waves, and spikes of COVID-19 statistics, I've also seen this past year jettison by, stealing memories and milestones with each passing day. (I'm sure the fact my kids are heading off to college this fall has amplified my feeling that time is too short!)

That's why a spring renewal ritual sounds especially gratifying—and necessary—right now. In this issue, Angie Parris-Raney shares ways we can detox our body and mind as we prepare to enter a new space of rejuvenation. In her article "[Detox on the Equinox](#)," Angie takes us through five ayurvedic steps to detox as part of spring's renewal process. She writes, "Just as spring is a great

time to clean out our closets and drawers, it's also a good time to clean up our diet and daily routines." We partnered her article with "[Align with the Rhythms of Nature](#)" from Heath and Nicole Reed, masters of living a balanced life. Their self-care exercise offers a quick way to find your center when life puts you on shaky ground. Watch their video and give this simple practice a try.

This spring brings an extra dose of renewal and hope, as does the accelerated US vaccine rollout (see "Massage and Vaccines"). I'm ready.

I'm ready to hug my mom and take her out for the birthday lunch date we canceled out of precaution last March. I'm ready to see my coworkers again (without Zoom!). I'm ready to be with people and put "virtual hugs" away. And I'm ready to see my massage therapist! How about you?



5

The number of strokes in traditional Swedish massage: effleurage, petrissage, friction, tapotement, and vibration. Swedish massage is the foundation of what's taught in massage schools and delivered in massage therapy treatment rooms worldwide.

Body Sense

massage, bodywork & healthy living

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Chronic Stress a Strong Risk Factor for Heart Attack

There are so many reasons to eliminate stress in our lives, and the evidence keeps getting stronger. A study published in *Scientific Reports* reveals patients who suffered an acute myocardial infarction (AMI)—a heart attack—had elevated levels of cortisol (our primary stress hormone) in the month before the event.

Researchers measured cortisol levels in hair samples from 174 men and women who had been admitted for AMI to cardiology clinics in Southeastern Sweden. They found that elevated cortisol levels were evident in both the men and women, showing chronic stress is a strong risk factor for heart attack. [Read the full study.](#)

Tip: The Mayo Clinic recommends massage as one of the relaxation-based tools you can use to fight chronic stress.

I've Just Been Vaccinated. Can I Schedule a Massage?

By Ruth Werner

Now that COVID vaccine distribution is underway, we have a question to ponder: When is it appropriate for clients who are going through this process to receive massage therapy?


MY ANSWER

My recommendation is to wait at least two days after an injection, just in case you have a negative reaction. Most people will have some local arm pain and swelling, but others will have more severe, flu-like symptoms. For the latter, delay massage until you are back to full speed.

MY RATIONALE

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines currently being administered in the US are mRNA vaccines. This is a new technology that induces an immune system response to SARS-CoV-2 without exposure to the virus. In other words, this vaccine cannot possibly cause even a low-grade form of COVID-19, but it equips the immune system to launch a powerful response to fight off an infection. (A terrific explanation of [how the mRNA strategy works](#) can be found here—it will be the best 3 minutes you can spend to understand this process.)

The mRNA vaccine strategy appears to be safe and effective—that's the good news. It also appears to initiate robust T-cell activity, which leads to longer-lasting protection than B-cells alone—also good news. However, these vaccines have a higher rate of side effects than we see with some other vaccines: they are reactogenic (likely to create reactions). This is good; it shows the body is creating a healthy and aggressive stance. But it is also uncomfortable. Specifically, side effects include pain and swelling at the injection site (this happens for most patients), along with systemic symptoms like fatigue, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills, nausea, vomiting, and fever.

Follow-up surveys about systemic post-vaccine reactions suggest they are more common in younger patients than in older ones, and they are often more severe after a second dose than after the first dose. If these reactions happen at all, they develop within 48 hours of the injection, and most people find they resolve after a day of discomfort. 

*Ruth Werner is a former massage therapist, a writer, and an NCBTMB-approved provider of continuing education. She wrote *A Massage Therapist's Guide to Pathology* (available at [BooksofDiscovery.com](#)) now in its seventh edition, which is used in massage schools worldwide.*





Spring equinox arrives March 20 this year. Astronomically speaking, the spring equinox represents the first day of spring.

Detox on the Equinox

5 Ayurvedic Ways to Improve Balance in Your Body and Mind

By Angie Parris-Raney

Spring is a time of renewal and rebirth. As nature emerges, there is a wellspring of life filled with hope and inspiration. For some, however, it can mean a heavy and damp season associated with colds, congestion, and allergies. Thankfully, ayurveda—one of the world's oldest holistic healing systems—offers a guideline to counter these characteristics with diet and lifestyle routines to strengthen a healthy immune system as we shift into the new season.

According to ayurveda, spring is *kapha* season, which reflects the qualities of water and cohesion. Kapha characteristics include words like *cold, heavy, dull, cloudy, slow, or dense*. Over the winter months, we may have accumulated even more of these attributes. Ayurveda recognizes that “like increases like.” To counter this type of imbalance, we look to diet and lifestyle routines to invite a sense of lightness, warmth, dryness, and sharpness to support our physiology as it aligns with the changes of nature.

Just as spring is a great time to clean out our closets and drawers, it's also a good time to clean up our diet and daily routines. Here are five tips to kick-start your ayurvedic detox this season.

1. PURIFY THE MIND WITH MEDITATION

Our beliefs, thoughts, and emotions directly affect the chemical reactions that take place in every cell in our body. Because of that, it's important to observe our thoughts and feelings so we have an opportunity to respond to events

in a healthier way. Meditation is a practice that settles the mind into silence, connecting the self to its inner wisdom. In silence, we access joy, peace, harmony, love, and compassion. As a result of meditation, we bring these qualities back into our life, and we become more consciously aware to make healthier choices.

A growing library of research continues to support the physiological benefits of meditation, including decreased anxiety, heart rate, inflammation, and stress hormone production; increased antiaging hormone production; and a strengthened immune system. One study, supported by the Chopra Foundation, compared meditation to the effects of a vacation. Researchers found quantifiable physiological changes with longer-lasting effects (up to 10 months) in those who meditated in a nourishing environment, compared to those who went on a vacation.¹

If you've never meditated before, today is the perfect day to start! If you're familiar with the power of meditation but haven't practiced for a while, then today is the day to give yourself 10 quiet minutes to reacquaint yourself with your practice.

2. MOVE, BREATHE, SWEAT

Ideally, we want to balance the whole system, which includes both the body and the mind. It's also essential that exercise gives more than it takes, not robbing you of energy and leaving you feeling depleted. Ayurveda views exercise as a primer for daily activity. Walking is among the most natural and beneficial means of exercise. Aim to walk at a brisk pace for at least 30 minutes daily. And for additional benefit, increase aerobic activity to three times per week. This can include activities such as bicycling, swimming, or an aerobics class.

What is a Dosha?

Ayurveda teaches the universe is comprised of five sacred nature elements including space, air, fire, water, and earth. These characteristics can be used to describe matter and all living things, and govern activities of the body and mind (for example, digestion, sleep, and emotions). The combination of the elements are called constitutions, or *doshas*. Each of us have all three doshas, yet we each possess a unique combination of these nature elements.



VATA

Air/Space

Space is formless and represents infinite possibilities. Air has the qualities of movement and change.



PITTA

Fire

Fire is hot, illuminating, and transformational (i.e., from wood to ash).



KAPHA

Water/Earth

Water is flowing, cohesive, and protective. Earth is solid, heavy, and stable.

Just as spring is a great time to clean out our closets and drawers, it's also a good time to clean up our diet and daily routines.

Nourishing, gentle movement that lengthens and tones muscles while creating space in every joint of the body is greatly beneficial for balancing kapha. Yoga and Pilates are wonderful practices to lubricate the joints, tendons, and ligaments, as well as tone the inner organs. It's important to note that yoga is not just a means of exercise. Yoga *asanas* (postures) prepare the mind for meditation. And meditation is asana for the mind. Beneficial poses to open the chest and expand breathing include [bow](#), [camel](#), [cobra](#), [fish](#), and [locust](#) asanas.

Bhastrika breath (bellows breath) is a perfect breathing exercise to encourage a sense of lightness and clarity to counter kapha. It strengthens the vitality of the lungs and assists in relieving allergies and asthma. To practice, sit in the lotus position with the spine and head erect. Close the eyes and relax the body. Inhale passively through the nose, and exhale actively through the mouth, with a little force. Begin slowly and then increase the speed of the inhale and exhale. Imagine the breath as a bellow stoking the fire. Practice one round of 30 exhalations, then rest for a minute breathing normally. Complete up to five rounds to relieve stress. Avoid any feelings of forcing, and stop the exercise if you feel any discomfort or faintness. ***Bhastrika* breath should not be practiced by people with high blood pressure, heart disease, retinal problems, or vertigo.**

3. CLEAN YOUR TONGUE

Your tongue can tell you a lot about your digestion. First thing in the morning, note how coated your tongue is. If there is a foul smell and a lot of coating on the tongue, it's a sure sign you have not properly digested last night's meal. This coating means there is much *ama* or toxicity lingering in the system. Don't reabsorb the bacteria into the body. As you awaken, use a stainless-steel tongue scraper to gently remove this coating. Begin scraping from the back of the tongue forward, rinse, and repeat as necessary (usually several times). Scraping also sends an indirect signal to the internal organs and stimulates digestive enzymes. A healthy tongue is pink and clear.

4. NOURISH THE SENSES WITH SELF-MASSAGE

Let's face it, nothing can quite replace the healing touch of professional massage. But did you know you can help sustain those healing benefits with your own daily self-massage? Ayurveda recommends a daily *abhyanga* "oil bath" for self-care and sensory nourishment. The Sanskrit word *sneha* translates to "oil" and "love." There is an inherent connection between nourishing the body with oil and love, and it can be a very grounding experience, giving a sense of stability and warmth.


If you don't have time for a full-body self-massage, just massaging the scalp, ears, and feet will address major acupressure points, tonify internal organs, improve circulation, and move out inflammation. Gently massage oil into your skin, working from the top of the head down, then slip into a bath. Creating a steam room with your bath opens the pores and allows the oils to penetrate deeply and moisturize the skin. You might even add your favorite essential oils to your bathwater for a healing aromatherapy experience.

5. FAVOR A LIGHTER, DRIER, LESS OILY DIET THIS TIME OF YEAR

It's always a good rule of thumb to "eat the rainbow" with a plate full of vegetables all having specific phytonutrients. During the spring, heavy dairy products (cheese, yogurt, and ice cream) should be reduced since they tend to aggravate kapha. Favor more pungent (such as ginger,



turmeric, cumin), bitter (such as leafy greens, asparagus, and cruciferous vegetables), and astringent (legumes such as yellow split peas, red lentils, and garbanzo beans) tastes, as these can help balance mucus production and purify the channels of elimination. Eat fresh foods, but not necessarily raw. If you slightly warm and cook the vegetables, it's much easier for the digestive system. Also, favor warm herbal drinks, especially after your meal. A cup of hot water and honey help balance kapha during the spring. But never cook honey as it acts as a toxin in the body.

By adjusting a few of your daily routines and aligning with the rhythms of nature, you can support your body's natural ability to heal itself in any season. Remember, self-care equals self-love. 

Note

I. E. S. Epel, "Meditation and Vacation Effects Have an Impact on Disease-Associated Molecular Phenotypes," *Translational Psychiatry* 6 (2016): <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27576169>.

Angie Parris-Raney, LMT, has been practicing massage therapy and bodywork in Colorado since 2001. She is a Chopra Center Certified Instructor in meditation and ayurveda lifestyle, and cofounded the nonprofit Project Inti, providing outreach and education to low-income families and children in Peru. You can learn more about her work at projectinti.org or goodhealthlivingforyou.com.



Align with the Rhythms of Nature

By Heath and Nicole Reed


During significant periods of change, ancient wisdom from traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) offers us modern-day counsel to align with the rhythms of nature. We can do this by fortifying our felt sense of groundedness, centeredness, and presence—even when we find ourselves standing on shaky ground. Explore the following practice as an opportunity to befriend the unpredictable and unfamiliar nature of change as you realign with nature and your core.

CENTERING BREATH QIGONG

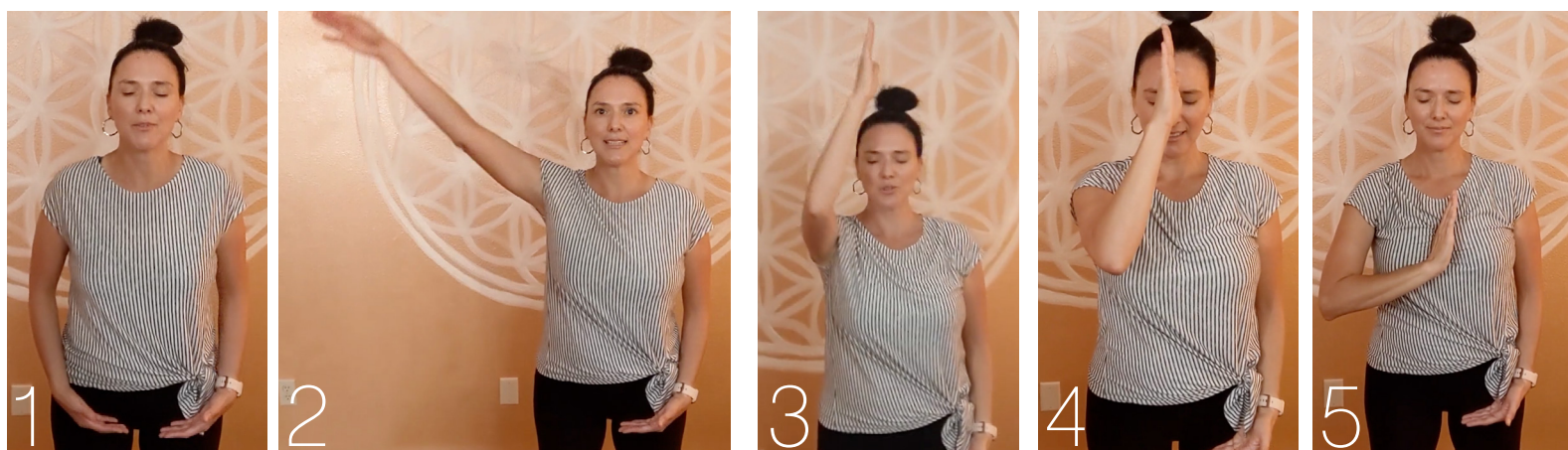
1. Stand or sit with your feet hip-width apart or wider. Feel yourself rooted down and lifted up at the same time. Visualize yourself as a bridge between heaven and earth. Rest your hands palms up in front of the base of your belly.
2. Slowly float your right arm out to the side and inhale as you continue to lift your outstretched arm over your head.
3. As you exhale, make a half-prayer shape with your right hand as you trace the centerline of your body from above your head, down through your forehead, sternum, and navel, and then return back to starting position. Repeat this same flow with your left arm to complete the circle shape and bring your centering energy and intention down the axial highway of your central nervous system.

Continue to flow with alternating arms and equal breaths until you feel calm, centered, and aligned. Imagine the light of your attention growing brighter in your belly with each exhale as you return your hands to your center.

4. Just before you complete this exercise, pause and gently press your half-prayer knuckle of your thumb into the space between your brow on your forehead (your third eye), and breathe for one full inhale and exhale.
5. Then, descend your half prayer to the sternum and pause at your heart space for a full breath in and out. Repeat with your opposite hand.

When you feel complete, gather your flowing energy into your belly by resting your hands palm over palm over your lower belly (or *dan tien*). Pause and notice how you feel. Trust in the energy you create. Trust that your energy knows where to go and your body knows how to heal itself. 

Heath and Nicole Reed are co-founders of Living Metta or Living “Loving Kindness.” The Reeds have been team-teaching national and international workshops and retreats since 2001. They place a strong emphasis on growing body intelligence, intuition, and self-care. Their bodywork, self-care videos, webinars, home-study courses, and more can be found at livingmetta.com.



Upper Back Pain

How Massage Can Address the Impacts of a Sedentary Lifestyle

By Whitney Lowe



Upper back pain, or thoracic spine pain (TSP), is common—especially for people who spend long hours in front of a desk or computer screen. TSP is more common in women than men,¹ and TSP also appears to be occurring with increasing frequency among adolescents. It is correlated with heavy loads, like a backpack full of books. Other factors that play a prominent role in adolescent TSP include the frequency of physical activity, daily time spent watching television, studying in bed, sitting postures when writing, and computer usage.²

Despite the harm caused by poor posture and sedentary habits, massage therapy paired with home care and posture awareness can have a significant impact on upper back pain.

CAUSES OF UPPER BACK PAIN

A key cause of upper back pain is “biomechanical overload.” Sitting for hours in a sedentary posture with a forward-head tilt to look at a monitor screen puts a significant biomechanical strain on the thoracic extensor muscles in the upper back. These postures require the muscles to work with long periods of contraction to offset the pull of gravity on the head. Some of these muscles are quite deep, so it is easy for them to be overlooked.

Upper back pain may also be caused by factors other than mechanical overload and postural strain. TSP may result from bony disorders and degenerative conditions of the vertebral column, rib articulation problems, as well as various systemic disorders that may affect the gastrointestinal, cardiopulmonary, and renal systems.

TREATMENT STRATEGIES

Massage and Bodywork

The vast majority of upper back pain complaints involve the soft tissues. As a result, massage is an excellent strategy for these complaints. If you haven’t already done so, talk with your therapist about a treatment plan for your pain.


Home-Care Treatment

In addition to working with your massage or bodywork practitioner, home-care options can play a helpful role in reducing the pain from soft-tissue tightness in the upper back. Here is one exercise to provide relief:

1. Place two tennis balls in a sock and position them on the floor. Lie down with the tennis balls placed between the scapula, with one on each side of the spine.
2. Pull your knees to your chest to apply the appropriate amount of pressure to the upper back as you lie on the tennis balls. You can then move the tennis balls around and focus on the most sensitive areas, which are those likely to house myofascial trigger points.

Movement

The popular phrase that “motion is lotion” is true in this region. Engage in arm and upper back movements that help increase range of motion and decrease the chronic tightness that results from long periods of immobilization. When you can combine simple movements with the soft-tissue treatments from your massage therapist, it is far more effective than either one of them alone.

As long as people are sitting for long periods in front of screens, there should be no shortage of work for their massage therapists. There are few treatment strategies as effective as massage for addressing most of the soft-tissue complaints in this region. Best results, however, come when clients work to gain greater freedom of movement while their massage therapists provide pain relief through their hands-on work. 

Notes

1. Andrew M. Briggs et al., “Thoracic Spine Pain in the General Population: Prevalence, Incidence and Associated Factors in Children, Adolescents and Adults. A Systematic Review.” *BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders* 10, no. 1 (June 2009): 77, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2474-10-77>.
2. Matias Noll et al., “Back Pain Prevalence and Associated Factors in Children and Adolescents: An Epidemiological Population Study,” *Revista de Saude Publica* 50 (May 2016): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1518-8787.2016050006175>.

Whitney Lowe is the developer and instructor of one of the profession’s most popular orthopedic massage training programs. His text and programs have been used by professionals and schools for almost 30 years. Learn more at academyofclinicalmassage.com.



Kristin Coverly, LMT, is a massage therapist and the director of professional education for Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals.

What can you tell me about vibration? My new massage therapist used what she called “vibration techniques” in my session and I really liked the effects.

I'm so happy to hear your massage therapist introduced you to a technique you found beneficial! Vibration is a Swedish massage technique that can be applied in several ways, including fine vibration (one spot receives rapid and sustained vibration), shaking (muscles are lifted and shaken), jostling (a limb of the body is jostled back and forth), and rocking (an area of the body is gently pushed and released so it rocks back and forth).

The effects of vibration techniques range from stimulating to relaxing based on the stroke chosen and the speed at which the stroke is applied. Some massage therapists may use a handheld massage tool, in addition to their fingers, to apply the fine vibration techniques to a focused area. Be sure to let your massage therapist know you enjoyed the technique they used (so they incorporate it in your future sessions) and you're open to experiencing additional new techniques. You may find you have several new favorites!



I've noticed that my pores seem to be getting larger the older I get. What can I do to make them go away or make them smaller?

The skin's natural exfoliation process can begin to slow down as early as our mid-20s. As a result, collagen and elastin (the fibers that contribute to tightened and toned-looking skin) are not produced as quickly as they once were, which causes your skin (and pores) to stretch out and loosen up. But don't despair! While there is no way to “get rid of” your pores (pores are the opening for hair follicles and where the skin can release internal oils and sweat), there are several ways to help minimize their appearance.

Daily cleansing will help immensely. If you are not cleansing your skin regularly, you're allowing dirt and debris to clog your pores, which not only causes your pores to expand in size, but they also become more visible (yes, we're talking about you, blackheads). Manual exfoliants that contain micrograins can also be incorporated for a “power cleanse.” Chemical exfoliation can offer a deeper, gentler way to affect large pores. Talk to your skin care therapist about the right choices for your skin.

There are lifestyle choices that can also contribute to larger pores. Smoking prevents nutrients from reaching the skin, which results in damaged collagen and elastin fibers, causing the skin (and pores) to become saggy and dull. Excessive sun exposure also accelerates the aging process, which is counterproductive to your goals of firmer, more youthful-looking skin.

Emily Morgan is a licensed esthetician in the states of Massachusetts and Colorado and membership program manager for Associated Skin Care Professionals.





4 Myths About Food and Healthy Skin

By Alex Caspero

Fresh fruits and vegetables are loaded with antiaging antioxidants and contain plenty of water, making them a one-two punch for a gorgeous glow.

Chances are you've heard conflicting information about the best foods to eat for your skin. With so many opinions out there—professional and otherwise—it can be hard to separate fact from fiction. Below are recurring myths and definitive answers.

MYTH #1: GOOD GENES OUTWEIGH LIFESTYLE CHOICES

While it is a blessing to have good genes, no one is guaranteed to have “good” or “bad” skin throughout their entire life. Lifestyle choices play a large factor in how your skin will age or respond to breakouts.


MYTH #2: CERTAIN FOODS WILL ALWAYS CAUSE BREAKOUTS

As there is variability between individuals on what exactly causes acne flare-ups, it is a myth to say that specific foods, like dairy and sugar, will cause issues for everybody. In addition to diet, stress and hormonal shifts can exacerbate breakouts in some but not others.

MYTH #3: ALL OILS ARE BAD

It is true that too many greasy and fried foods may do more harm than good, but that doesn't mean all oils are bad for your skin. Oils rich in omega-3 fatty acids, like those found in flax seeds, walnuts, and salmon, can help reduce inflammation that can lead to redness and breakouts.

MYTH #4: YOU MUST CUT OUT ALL SUGAR FOR HEALTHY SKIN

Some sweeteners are more harmful than others, but the dose makes the poison. High-sugar foods like soda, sweetened teas, and dessert can disrupt the formation of collagen, which can impact skin tone and structure. However, that doesn't mean you have to swear off sweets for good. The occasional treat will not derail all of your beauty efforts—especially with an overall healthy diet. 

Alex Caspero is a registered dietitian specializing in plant-based diets. Her blog, [Delish Knowledge](https://delishknowledge.com), focuses on simple, healthy recipes. Find her at delishknowledge.com

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