

6 Non-Beauty Habits That Are Making Your Sensitive Skin Worse

Carolyn Hsu, Digital Managing Editor | October 19, 2015

You follow the rules of taking care of sensitive skin: use a gentle cleanser, a fragrance-free moisturizer and limit layering too many products on your face. But, if your skin still often feels like it's in a state of panic more often than not, it may be time to take a look at some other factors that could be aggravating it. We tapped leading skin care experts to reveal daily habits that could be worsening your already sensitive skin.

Taking Long Showers

"Hot water is very drying to skin," says celebrity aesthetician Nerida Joy. "Sensitive skin should not be exposed to hot water for a long time at all. In addition, the chlorine in shower water can also aggravate skin and add to the sensitivity."

Not Getting Enough Sleep

A good night's sleep can mean the difference between good skin and irritated skin, says New York dermatologist

Jody Levine, MD. "When you are sleep-deprived, your body makes more of the stress hormone cortisol. Elevated levels of cortisol can lead to increased inflammation in the body, hurting your skin's quality." Recent research published in the journal *Clinics in Dermatology* showed that, "Poor sleep can lead to increased stress hormones in the body that increase the severity of inflammatory skin conditions such as acne or psoriasis."

Furthermore, while you're sleeping, your body's hydration rebalances. "Skin is able to recover moisture during sleep," explains Dr. Levine. "Not getting enough sleep results in poor water balance, resulting in dryness and sensitivity."

Wearing Certain Metals or Leather

A type of skin sensitivity called contact dermatitis occurs when skin is exposed to certain types of materials. "Jewelry metals and fragrances top the list of substances most likely to cause skin rashes," says Dr. Levine. "Severe skin reactions to jewelry are usually caused by nickel contained in the metal." Some people also experience skin reactions from chemicals used in the leather tanning process. These types of skin sensitivities usually disappear once the offending ingredient is removed from contact with the skin. "A patch test performed by a dermatologist can help show if there is a reaction to common allergens," adds Dr. Levine.

Stress

"The hormones that are affected by stress can cause your skin to slow down the cell renewal process, and if this continues for long enough, your skin will not maintain and repair the barrier as quickly as it should," says New Orleans aesthetician Mandy Epley. Those with sensitive skin already have a weakened skin barrier, and further damage increases sensitivity.

Eating Processed Carbs

Processed baked goods (such as muffins and donuts) are bad on so many levels because of their high sugar content and preservations for longer shelf life. "Sugar increases inflammation in the skin, which can worsen acne and rosacea," says Chevy Chase, MD, dermatologist Elizabeth Tanzi, MD.

Another skin-sabotaging culprit? Bagels. "Bagels have a massively high glycemic index, which increases insulting leading to increased inflammation in the body, including the skin," explains Dr. Tanzi

The Weather

Changes in the weather can affect your skin too, especially when it's colder. In winter, the colder air combined with central heating (and moving between the two) can cause skin to become dehydrated and more sensitive, leading to tightness, soreness and discomfort. To combat the damaging effects of dry air, Epley recommends using a humidifier during the colder seasons.



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