

- Aesthetics

## How to boost your skin's secret defences

Daily Express · 27 May 2021 · 32 · Each week our experts Dr AAMER KHAN and LESLEY REYNOLDS bring you the latest beauty news and anti-ageing advice

Want to know the secret to happy, healthy skin? It's your microbiome. Yes, just like the gut, your skin has its own flora, a unique ecosystem of bacteria, fungi and viruses that live on the surface and create the chemicals needed to keep it healthy and strong.

For the most part, your skin's microbiome looks after itself. However, a damaging mix of pollution and stress, along with harsh scrubs and skincare, can create a less-than-ideal environment. And when there are more harmful-than-helpful bacteria on the skin, it can lead to blemishes, redness, dryness, itching and wrinkles.

For many of us, the pandemic has contributed to the rise of skin problems including 'maskne' and dryness caused by over-zealous cleansing. But feeding and boosting the skin's good bacteria with the right ingredients will get it back on track in no time.

And with studies showing more than 90 per cent of skin conditions can be traced back to our skin microbiome and an impaired skin barrier, there's never been a better time to give it a helping hand.

So, from mists to moisturisers, here's how you can join the microbiome movement.

### MEND YOUR MICROBIOME

Our modern lifestyles – what we eat, being over-hygienic, the products we use and our reduced exposure to nature – have decreased our microbial diversity, making us more susceptible to inflammatory skin conditions. DON'T over cleanse your skin with oil-stripping bar soaps, detergents and antiseptics. Believe it or not, healthy skin is not squeaky clean.

Cleansing twice a day, using a gentle cleanser, is ideal for most skin types.

DO

opt for products that are kind to the skin with clean, simplified ingredient lists. Look for aloe, jojoba oil, shea butter and squalane oil.

If you like using stronger ingredients like retinoids, use in moderation and top your good bacteria up with a product containing pre and probiotics

Probiotics are live microorganisms that are beneficial to your skin health, prebiotics are the food source that help to keep your probiotics alive and active.

**DON'T**

use harsh ingredients like alcohol on your face as this can strip the skin of its natural oils. They're often found in toners and listed on labels as "SD alcohol", "denatured alcohol", "ethyl alcohol" or "isopropyl alcohol". People with acne or oily skin often love how they degrease the skin, but they can damage your microbiome and, in turn, your skin barrier.

**DO**

test ingredients you haven't used before. Ask for a small tester or sample and try the product out on a small patch of skin on your arm, or behind your ear, before using them all over your face.

Try one product at a time so if you develop a reaction, you know which ingredient caused it.

**DON'T** Over-treat

using multiple products with different ingredients. Using too many products with strong ingredients can overload your skin and cause inflammation, or make your face super sensitive. Streamline your regimen and remember that, often, less is more.

**SUPER SKINCARE**

While still in its infancy, skin microbiome research has awakened a new understanding of skin biology. Recent studies have shown the use of certain pre and probiotics can actually help reinforce the skin barrier. In the same way they treat and prevent problems in the gut, when applied topically they encourage the skin to grow its own beneficial bacteria.

This strengthens sensitive skin, fights signs of pollution and calms conditions like eczema and acne.

■ ■ Meder Hydra-Fill Mask,

£61 (mederbeauty.com), is the closest you'll get to a non-invasive professional facial at home. The stretchy sheet mask is soaked in an active gel formulation containing a new prebiotic discovered in Greenland to plump, brighten and hydrate.

■ ■ Vichy Slow Age Day Cream SPF30, £20 (escentual.com), contains probiotic-derived bifidus, for normal to dry skin.

■ ■ Institut Esthederm Cellular Water Mist, £18 (lookfantastic.com), is an ultrafine spray that helps preserve the quality and biodiversity of the skin's microbiome to keep it looking young and revived.

■ ■ The Inkey List Multi-Biotic Moisturiser, £12.99 (uk.theinkeylist.com), is great for blemish-prone skin. It's lightweight, and contains protective pre and probiotic goodness.

- ■ Superdrug Naturally Radiant Glow Calming Overnight Mask, £3.35, uses coconut yogurt to rebalance and calm skin.
- ■ Aveeno Skin Relief Cica Balm, £6.99 (Boots), is formulated with a prebiotic oat complex to improve the natural balance of the skin.
- ■ Too Faced Hangover Good In Bed Ultra-hydrating Replenishing Serum, £32 (cult-beauty.co.uk), mixes hyaluronic acid with probiotics to give a dewy finish and help balance skin's moisture levels.
- ■ Lancome Advanced Genifique Youth Activating Concentrate, £51 (escentual.com), includes an incredible seven pre and probiotic-derived extracts for youthful-looking skin.
- For more of Lesley's tips, visit [lesleyreynolds.com](http://lesleyreynolds.com)