

WOULD YOU POP a PILL FOR BETTER SKIN?



What if there was a pill that promised to not only boost your internal wellbeing but also prevent breakouts, inflammation and toxic build-up in your skin...? Well, it's a reality. This 'beauty pill' is a probiotic, and it's available at your local chemist

Unless you've been living on a desert island with no wi-fi and no 'health' Insta accounts, you've almost definitely heard of probiotics. 'Good bacteria', as they're often called, are now cropping up in everything from our drinks to our protein powders. They're also popping up on our feeds, with health-conscious celebs such as Bella Hadid, Anna Paquin, Miranda Kerr and Katy Perry touting the benefits of a diet high in good bacteria. But what *are* probiotics? How important are

they? And what the heck does gut health have to do with our complexions? We asked the experts to find out whether we should get on board or dismiss them as another food fad.

What on Earth are probiotics anyway?

Here's the lowdown: 'Probiotics are live microorganisms found in our digestive tract,' says Zoe Bingley-Pullin, celebrity nutritionist and founder of online food program Falling in Love with Food. 'There is growing research supporting the connection between good gut health and overall well-being, particularly when it comes to immunity, metabolic syndrome, skin health, irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory conditions, mood and weight.'

Found in our stomachs in their millions, probiotics play a major role in how we obtain nutrients from the food we eat. Scientists are constantly coming up with new reasons to get probiotics into our diet, from keeping weight under control to giving a sluggish immunity a boost, so there's already a lot of motivation to jump on the probiotic bandwagon. And now (here's where it gets interesting) a glowing complexion can be attributed to this super supplement, too.

Gut/skin connection

'Beauty begins in the belly,' says Carla Oates, naturalist and founder of The Beauty Chef. Probiotics produce a number of important vitamins, she explains, including skin-boosting B2, B3 and biotin, and detoxifying B12, folic acid and vitamin K. 'Probiotics neutralise some chemicals and toxins so they don't have to be processed through the liver.'

The skin is not only our body's shield against the outside world, it's also a way for our body to get rid of any unwanted nasties. 'The skin is an organ of elimination,' says Swisse expert and naturopath Cheryl Goodman. 'And if our digestive system and liver are not functioning optimally, toxins can then impact our skin.'

An out-of-sorts digestive system often comes down to the food we eat. Considering we are constantly surrounded by highly processed, sugary, calorie-laden foods, it's little

wonder things get kinda out of whack. Sure, the odd splurge isn't going to hurt, but over-indulge too much and it could show up on your face as spots, redness or sensitivities.

'An unhealthy balance of gut bacteria can trigger inflammation and increase sebum [oil] production,' says Bingley-Pullin. 'This can have an impact on the skin.'

Keep in mind that, along with your nails and hair, your skin is one of the last parts of your body to get access to any nutrients (our vital organs get first dibs), so it's going to be the first place to suffer if things

aren't balanced inside. The good news is that probiotics can help a complexion in crisis (or one that just needs a radiance boost). They can help to reduce any inflammation and support the skin's barrier function – both major pluses for

red, irritated, sensitised or congested skin. 'There's lots of research looking at using probiotics for treating skin conditions such as psoriasis, eczema and acne,' explains Bingley-Pullin. ➡

'An unhealthy balance of gut bacteria triggers inflammation'

NEED A TUNE-UP?

A gut overhaul could be the way to get your insides back to healthy. **Regul8 Digestive Tune-Up***, \$198, is a three-step herbal system that cleanses, restores and maintains your insides so that the good bacteria can flourish in your digestive system.



*REGUL8.COM.AU. PHOTOGRAPHY BY PABLO MARTIN/BAUER

Now let's talk prebiotics...

Before you rush down to the chemist to stock up, keep in mind that probiotics aren't the only players in the quest for good skin. Prebiotics are equally important if you want a Bella Hadid-worthy glow.

'A prebiotic is a type of fibre that remains undigested once it has passed through the digestive tract,' says James Nevile, senior pharmacist at Amcal. 'Prebiotics are naturally high in some vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts and seeds.'

Able to pass through the small intestine undigested, these foods can travel all the way into the colon where they are fermented by gut flora.

The easiest way to think of the relationship between prebiotics and probiotics is that prebiotics are the home-delivered meal for probiotics. 'Prebiotics act as lunch for the probiotics and help them to multiply,' explains Oates. Give probiotics enough to eat and

they will thrive (meaning you'll have a healthy gut and glowing skin), but starve them and the poor good bacteria will die off. The result: an unhappy tummy and blah skin.

'Foods rich in prebiotics include chicory, Jerusalem artichokes, asparagus, bananas, onions, legumes,' says Oates, who also recommends upping your fibre content to get rid of any toxic build-up, which can present as issues such as pimples or sensitivity on the skin. 'Foods rich in fibre, like leafy greens, berries, beans and peas, support the elimination process and remove toxins so they are not re-absorbed back into the bloodstream,' she says.

So should you pop a pill – or will food do?

Health brands are flooding the market with new ways to get probiotics into your life (you can even find probiotic-rich cocktails on bar menus). Just pop a daily probiotic pill, containing up to 100 billion probiotics per capsule, and your probiotic count is sorted.

But do keep in mind that chugging down probiotics will only get you so far – you will need to clean up your diet too.

'If you want glowing skin, the first place to start is with your diet and in maintaining good gut health,' says Sally Joseph, clinical nutritionist, health and wellbeing coach and author of *Love Your Gut*. 'The health of your gut will have a direct influence over the health and function of every cell, organ and body system.'

'Ensure you are eating adequate fibre, fermented foods such as yoghurt and sauerkraut, healthy fats and protein,' advises Goodman. 'Keep hydrated and consume less refined and junk foods. If you have a known allergy or intolerance, it's important to avoid those particular foods.'

Sure, Katy Perry takes a probiotic every day to keep herself at her peak. But forking out for (often pricey) probiotic supplements isn't mandatory. With a bit of planning, you can get enough probiotics from the

food you eat. The key here is fermentation. 'When you ferment food, it is broken down so the nutrients become more available to the body by at least five times,' says Oates. 'Fermenting foods also helps to neutralise anti-nutrients that interfere with digestion.'

It seems, when it comes to your skin, it really is gut related. 'If you don't absorb, assimilate and eliminate properly, you can't be healthy,' says Debbie Dickson, founder and formulator of Regul8, a digestive health supplement. 'The best way you can improve your overall health is improve your gut health.'

So should we spend megabucks on a year's supply of probiotics supplements? Not necessarily. We say... boost your probiotics levels through what you eat, cut down on the junk food, exercise more and worry less. Sure, pop a pill if you (and your skin) are feeling rundown, or you've been ill – your skin will thank you for it. But then... perhaps a skin-boosting kombucha mocktail might do the trick too.

GOOD SKIN DIET UPDATE

WANT TO UP YOUR PROBIOTIC AND PREBIOTICS? HERE ARE THE FOOD HEROES YOU SHOULD BE EATING

PROBIOTICS HEROES



NATURAL YOGHURT

Yoghurt is well-known for its benefits. Look for organic, full-fat, natural yoghurt.



KIMCHI

A traditional Korean dish, kimchi is made of fermented vegetables (often cabbage).



MISO PASTE

A cultured thick paste made from soybeans, miso is a good source of probiotics.



KOMBUCHA

Made using a starter culture, known as a SCOBY, it has a sweet, fizzy taste.

PREBIOTICS HEROES



OATS

Oats are a great source of both fibre and prebiotics. Dig into the bircher muesli!



APPLES

The fibres found in apples can ferment into short-chain fatty acids that feed probiotics.



GARLIC AND ONION

Garlic and onion pack a prebiotic hit – keep adding them to your stir-fries!



LEEKS AND ASPARAGUS

High in inulin, these vegies give your gut a good prebiotic boost.



Add berries to your coconut kefir for an antioxidant and fibre hit.

MAKE YOUR OWN KEFIR

HOW TO MAKE:

Combine the kefir grains or kefir starter (as directed on packet) with the coconut milk in a glass jar. Cover with a cloth secured with a rubber band and let it sit on the kitchen bench (a warm environment is best for fermenting) for 12-24 hours. Give your kefir a few stirs after about 12 hours.

Once the coconut milk is thick and has a slightly sour flavour, it has turned into kefir. Strain the mixture through a plastic strainer to remove the grains. Store the kefir in the fridge and enjoy for breakfast or a gut-loving snack. If your kefir doesn't thicken within 24 hours, it might just be that the temperature in your house isn't warm enough.

TIP: Kefir doesn't like metal, so never use a metal container to make kefir or a metal spoon to stir it.

CLINICAL NUTRITIONIST, HEALTH AND WELLBEING COACH SALLY JOSEPH HAS CONSULTED FOR CELEBS SUCH AS MIRANDA KERR, LARA WORTHINGTON AND LAYNE BEACHLEY ABOUT GUT HEALTH. HERE SHE SHARES HER RECIPE FOR COCONUT KEFIR (A FERMENTED MILK DRINK).

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 tablespoon kefir grains or kefir starter
- 1-2 cups unsweetened coconut milk
- Glass jar
- Muslin or cloth
- Rubber band

FROM *LOVE YOUR GUT*, BY SALLY JOSEPH, C.N., \$39.99*



PROBIOTICS MADE EASY

WITH LITERALLY MILLIONS OF PROBIOTIC BACTERIA IN A SINGLE SERVE, CONSIDER YOUR GUT HEALTH SORTED



Swisse Inner Balance, Probiotic 100 Billion, \$39.95. Each capsule contains a mind-blowing 100 billion probiotics. Take one a day and you're good to go. Your gut will thank you.



The Beauty Chef Glow Inner Beauty Powder, \$59.95. This bio-fermented beauty powder boasts antioxidants, minerals, vitamins and a whopping 500 million probiotics per serve.



Blackmores Superfood Powder Single Origin Cacao + Nature Boost Prebiotics & Probiotics, \$12.99. Tasty and filled with antioxidants, this powder has both probiotics and prebiotics.



Amcal Probiotics Plus, \$38.99. Boasting 25 billion live good bacteria per capsule as well as prebiotics, this supplement doesn't need refrigeration so you can keep a bottle in your desk drawer.



Capilano Beeotic Prebiotic Honey, \$8 for 175ml. While creating honey from nectar, bees add enzymes to honey, which creates prebiotic sugars. This honey is clinically proven to be rich in prebiotics.

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