



HOME BEAUTY TIPS

Why probiotics are making themselves an important part of skincare

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Probiotics are having a moment, but did you know that each specific strain has a different impact on our skin? Here are the ones you need to make a part of your skincare routine



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Our bodies are home to more than a trillion microbes—the umbrella term for all those organisms not visible to the naked eye, including bacteria, viruses and fungi. Microbes, or microorganisms, play their part in a wide spectrum of health issues, from propagating deadly diseases to protecting us against them. And while we’ve known for a while about the benefits of ‘good bacteria’ in the gut (thank you, Yakult), recent studies have shown that the same theory applies to the quality of our skin. So it’s time to wise up on the ‘bugs’ our skin needs to thrive.

“Bacterial colonies in the gut are directly linked to skin

—you cannot expect to have great skin if you have a sub-optimal gut,” explains My London Nutritionist owner Kamilla Schaffner, whose clients range from burnt-out, time-poor city workers to postpartum mothers and sufferers of chronic health issues. “On the flipside, the skin itself is a complex ecosystem—or microbiome—similar to gut flora,” says [skincare](#) expert Lisa Franklin. As Dr Justine Hexhall explains, our skin is “the body’s first defence and constantly communicates with our immune system”. And she should know; a consultant dermatologist, her Tarrant Street Clinic in Arundel is a favourite with beauty insiders.

You might be blissfully unaware of it, but your body is literally teeming with microbes—over a million of them inhabit every square centimetre of our skin. And that’s a good thing: “Healthy microbiomes self-police to ensure a single bacteria type doesn’t become dominant,” says Lisa Franklin. But according to Dr Whitney Bowe, author of [The Beauty of Dirty Skin](#), we may be our own worst enemy when it comes to protecting this delicate infrastructure. “When your good bugs are healthy, so is your skin because these essential bugs fight infections, combat environmental damage, boost our immune system, and keep our skin hydrated and radiant. But our obsession with antibacterial cleansers has stripped our skin of its

healthy bacteria,” she explains. “If your skin’s healthy microbiome is disrupted, it results in breakouts, rosacea flares, psoriasis, eczema and even sensitive skin.

Alarmingly, our gut tells a similar story, “I test the gut of all my patients and over 90 per cent have NG [No Growth in beneficial bacteria],” warns [Nigma Talib](#) ND, the naturopath and author of [Younger Skin Starts in the Gut](#), famous for her client list of loyal A-listers. “Age, [diet](#), not taking probiotics, antibiotic exposure and pregnancy can all affect this.”

Coming to the rescue is a rapidly growing market of products: probiotics, prebiotics and even postbiotics. All are available to take orally and look set to become a fixture in our skincare routines. “The American Academy of Dermatology hailed probiotics as a new breakthrough for its skin healing, calming and anti-microbial benefits,” explains Franklin. “They can help in many ways, and the type of probiotic you use on the skin will change the results you get,” concurs Claire Vero, founder of probiotic skincare brand Aurelia. But with over 1,000 different strains to choose from, what type of probiotic should you be reaching for?

Blemish-prone skin

Take: Schaffner recommends inulin powder, a prebiotic fibre that reaches the large intestine undigested, where bacteria use it to prosper.

Use: Skincare containing nitrosomonas eutropha (found in Mother Dirt's AO + Mist). "In a month, subjects saw a 35 per cent improvement in skin clarity," says Bowe. Later this year, look for products containing enterococcus faecalis SL-5, a new "natural antibiotic" known as Enterocin (and if you're wondering where faecalis comes from—well you'd be wondering correctly: gut flora). In a recent study "it reduced acne by 50 per cent in eight weeks," says Dr Hextall.

Eat: "Natural sources of inulin, such as bananas, onions and sweet potatoes, as well as [apple cider vinegar](#), which is believed to have [anti-acne](#) benefits," says Schaffner.

Dry, eczema-prone skin

Take: Lactobacillus rhamnosus produces lactic acid to balance skin's pH and in turn protect it from bad bacteria.

Use: When staphylococcus aureus becomes dominant, it causes eczema—but La-Roche Posay's Prebiotic

Thermal Spring Water can help to cultivate healthy bacteria that reduce staph levels. They've also added the prebiotic APF (a form of *vitreoscilla filiformis*), known for improving severely dry skin.

Eat: “Spirulina and olive skins are both prebiotics that retain moisture,” advises Schaffner.

Sensitive, rosacea-prone skin

Take: *Bifidobacterium lactis* and *Lactobacillus paracasei* are anti-inflammatory, so help with rosacea and [sensitive skin](#).

Use: “Results published in the *European Journal of Dermatology* show that topical application of *Lactobacillus paracasei* reduced inflammation and allergic reactions,” explains Franklin. Find it in [Elizabeth Arden's Superstart Probiotic Boost Mask](#), which hydrates and soothes reactive skin.

Eat: “Rich sources of natural probiotics, like aloe vera, yoghurt and kefir,” says Schaffner.

Ageing and sun-damaged skin

Take: *Lactobacillus plantarum*—“studies show that it safeguards collagen, so protects against UVB rays,

reduces wrinkles and improves elasticity,” says Bowe.

Use: The non-live bifido glycoprotein that Aurelia skincare uses is the result of 10 years of research. “It calms immune triggers stimulated by pollution and stress, so reduces damage to collagen, making it more anti-ageing than other probiotics,” explains Claire Vero.

Eat: “Chlorella and mushrooms, both antioxidant prebiotics that protect against ageing and sun damage.”

The glossary

1. Prebiotics: “Prebiotics are what probiotics eat to survive,” explains Dr Bowe.

Skin benefits:

- 1 Provides nourishment so good bacteria thrive
- 2 Encourages vital bacterial diversity

2. Probiotics: Live microbes that maintain or restore good bacteria.

Skin benefits:

- 1 Strengthens skin barrier

- 2 Fights bad bacteria
- 3 Controls inflammation

3. Postbiotics: “Bacterial by-products that reinforce the skin barrier, including enzymes, acids and peptides.”

Skin benefits:

- 1 Helps with allergic reactions, dermatitis, eczema and acne
- 2 Supports beneficial bacteria growth

5 tricks to buying probiotics

- 1 **Check skincare ingredients:** “If the probiotic isn’t near the top, it’s too diluted to work,” says Vero.
- 2 **Pick supplements wisely:** “Choose one that has lactobacillus acidophilus DDS-1, which has 30 years of evidence behind it,” says Talib.
- 3 **Look for:** “Delayed release supplements. Probiotics will be protected from stomach acid and reach your gut,” says Dr Bowe.
- 4 **Start with:** “A probiotic containing 10-15 billion CFUs (colony-forming units) and work up, as you may experience bloating when recolonising your gut,” adds Bowe.
- 5 **Check packaging:** “Probiotic skincare is fragile to both light and air, so non-glass, airless containers are best,” says Franklin.

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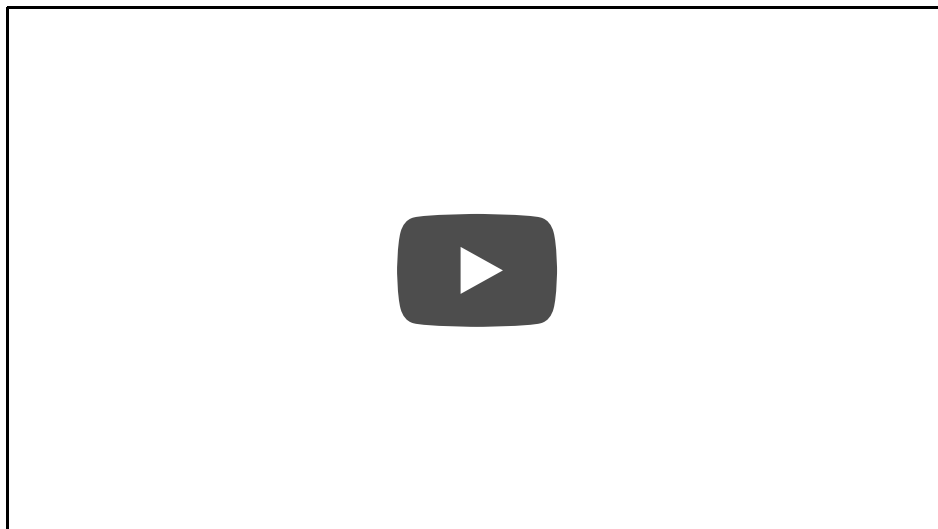
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