

Beauty

## The brush off

Brushing your hair is a given – but your skin? Lee Tulloch bristles with anticipation.



The Scandinavians do it regularly. Miranda Kerr and Elle Macpherson are devotees. On Goop, Gwyneth Paltrow's wellness portal, they gush over it, saying that it wakes up your whole body.

Dry brushing doesn't sound particularly exciting but it's one of the most ancient skincare routines and a coterie of modern followers claim it does everything from reducing cellulite (dubious) to boosting circulation (true).

I've often admired the beautiful natural brushes stocked in Swedish homewares boutiques but I've never come home with one, not quite understanding their purpose beyond scrubbing the floor. Then I tried a 75-minute High Definition Bodywork session at Venustus (venustus.com.au) in Sydney's eastern suburbs, where dry brushes and massage techniques are employed to stimulate the lymphatic system, a network of vessels, tissues and organs that transports lymph, a fluid containing infection-fighting white blood cells, throughout the body.

"The lymphatic system is unable to flow on its own," explains Venustus founder Jeannie Bourke. "So a lack of movement – from things like flying, driving or hospital stays – plus insufficient water intake, stress and pollution can all block lymphatic flow. This prevents nutrients and blood from rejuvenating cells, which equals cellulite, sagging skin, swelling and fat deposits, which can be resistant to diet and exercise."

A good way to get the body's drainage system moving is with vigorous, flowing massage that works on the lymph nodes, the filters. Dry brushing is less effective alone but it's something you can easily do at home. It lightly activates the lymphatic system with the additional benefit of sloughing off dead, dry skin cells.

I came away from the session with a round Stass & Co Body Brush, which has sisal bristles sourced from the agave plant. For a while I forgot that the brush was sitting in my bathroom because it wasn't a familiar part of my routine. But

summer was approaching and my dry skin needed a serious overhaul. I picked up the brush and tentatively started.

In the salon, Bourke had shown me how to brush with long, sweeping movements, always towards the heart, starting with the soles of the feet and moving up the legs to the bikini line, around the stomach and across the back then up the arms from the fingertips. The process only takes a few minutes before your shower and you moisturise afterwards.

I find the sisal bristles quite firm and a bit scratchy. But you're not scrubbing tiles – the point is not to irritate the skin – so strokes should be light (using it on your face is not recommended). Once I figured that out, it became a pleasant experience and even meditative. And I did feel invigorated and my skin definitely smoother.

Will I do it every day? A lifetime of experience tells me I won't. But apparently twice a week is enough to give myself a beneficial brush off. ●