

Brisk and Tingly – Skin Brushing

Sonya Bass, CH

The simple technique of skin brushing brings many visible benefits, including beautiful glowing skin, a firm, toned appearance and reduced cellulite. Stimulation of circulation and lymphatic system are two of the “hidden” benefits. Lymphatic fluid contains waste material, and when this system becomes sluggish, the results can be seen in the form of cellulite, dull complexion and poor skin tone.

Skin brushing stimulates the circulation and at the same time exfoliates the skin. When dead cells clog the surface, the skin is no longer able to achieve one of its main functions—that of elimination. The backup of toxins in the lymphatic fluid puts extra stress on the other organs responsible for elimination, the kidneys and liver.

Another factor in this equation are the sweat glands in the skin, which cannot work efficiently when the pores of the skin are clogged. Perspiration contains toxins. When we perspire, the moisture containing the toxins is released by the sweat glands. Drinking plenty of pure, clean water is important—especially during exercise—to move the toxins out of the body and to ensure the body has adequate liquid to allow the sweat glands to do their job.

The technique of skin brushing is easy, yet important. Each stroke should be firm, but gentle. Make long strokes and always brush towards the heart. Keep the brush movements smooth with a steady pressure on the brush. Have a brush routine, starting at the feet, then legs, trunk and lower back. Move to the hands, both back and front, arms and shoulders. For the scalp and neck and any areas above the heart, the brush strokes should be downward. Take extra care when brushing under the armpits as this is an area where the lymphatic

**We've heard of brushing
our hair and our teeth—
What about brushing skin?**

ducts become clogged. Areas that should not be brushed are nipples and genitals.

During the brushing process, you may notice tiny, dry flakes of skin. These dead cells cling to the surface and give it a dull, drab appearance. When the dead cells are removed, the skin can function more efficiently as an eliminative organ.

When you have finished brushing, take a shower. The most beneficial effects are achieved by starting with a hot shower and then switching to cold. This is very stimulating, and you may feel inclined to take the cold plunge on some days more than others! I would not recommend skin brushing in the evening, as the stimulating effect could disrupt your sleep pattern.

When purchasing a brush, look for natural fiber bristles and a long handle (you will be reaching down the length of the spine). Some brushes have a cotton strap across the brush to make it easier to hold when you are not using the handle. The bristles may feel too firm to be comfortable, but bear in mind that as you use the brush the bristles will soften slightly. Do not use this brush for other purposes or on other people! The brush should be kept clean: a weekly rinse is all that is needed. No other equipment is required. The entire procedure should take about five minutes, and the morning is a good time to establish the routine.

When you include skin brushing into your everyday regimen, the benefits will become more obvious both visibly and mentally. This simple procedure may seem a little strange at first, but once you feel comfortable with the brushing routine, it has a very therapeutic and stress-reducing effect. What a great way to start the day. ■

Sonya Bass is a chartered herbalist with 20 years of experience in the natural products industry. She lives in White Rock, BC.