

## Your Skin: A Peek Into Your Overall Health

Your skin is your body's largest organ. It is sometimes considered an organ because it contains several types of tissues and a membrane and it covers the body and all of its other organs.

Your skin can also be a window to your underlying health, says Wake Forest University's Joseph Jorizzo, MD, one of the experts who literally wrote the book on skin signs of internal disease. Many underlying health conditions -- some very serious -- first appear as skin problems. For some, what appears to be Rosacea may, in fact, be an indicator of dermatitis or a deeper health concern: lupus. Velvety plaques in the neck and/or armpit may suggest diabetes. A rash made up of reddish-purple, flat-topped bumps that may itch like crazy and usually appears on the wrists or ankles (but may be in the mouth, on the lower back, neck, legs, and genitals) may point to issues with the liver.

Because the skin often mirrors what goes on inside the body, you may be able to assess your overall general health by the condition of your skin. If your skin is healthy looking and free of breakouts, lesions or rashes, then chances are the inside of your body is generally in good shape as well.

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### Here are 5 Fast Tips to Maintain Healthy Skin and Body:

**1~ Protect your skin from the sun.** Be sure to apply sunscreen SPF 30+, seek the shade and wear protective clothing when you are out in the sun. Sun exposure increases the likelihood of your getting skin cancer.

**2~ Don't smoke.** Smoking is a habit that makes skin look older and contributes to wrinkles. Smoking narrows the tiny vessels in the outermost layers of skin which deprives the skin of oxygen and nutrients important for skin. Smoking also damages collagen and elastin which give skin its strength and elasticity. And smoking increases your chances for getting skin cancer.

**3~ Care for your skin.** Excessive daily cleansing and shaving can damage the skin. To keep your skin looking its best, use warm water rather than hot for bathing to retain more of your skin's natural oils. Use mild cleansers and avoid harsh soaps and detergents. Be sure to apply shaving cream, lotion or gel before shaving, and use a clean sharp razor. Shave in the direction the hair grows, not against it. After bathing, pat skin dry with a towel to preserve moisture in the skin. And finally, use a moisturizer for your skin type, preferably one with an SPF 30+.

**4~ Eat a healthy diet.** Some research suggests that a diet rich in fish oil or fish oil supplements and low in processed or refined carbohydrates may promote healthy skin. Drink plenty of water throughout the day.

**5~ Manage stress.** Uncontrolled stress may trigger acne breakouts and other skin issues. Get plenty of sleep and make time to do things you enjoy every day.