Body Brushing & Your Lymphatic Health

Your Skin - How it works and why body brushing helps

Your skin is your body's largest organ. It is incredible! It acts as the conduit for keeping good things in and bad things out. It is active, it lives and breathes. It flexes, it grows and shrinks. It holds everything in, and even more, it is a major organ of elimination and detoxification – just like your liver, colon and kidneys. Your lymphatic system uses your skin to help detox and it is thought that over one third of your body's daily impurities are excreted through your skin.

As we get a little older, our skin becomes less efficient at this whole detox/elimination process and less effective at naturally shedding the layers of dead skin cells that clog up the surface. Body Brushing is a fast and very effective way of helping keep your skin in peak condition. The **key benefits** are:

1. **Exfoliation –** removes the dead skin cells from skin's surface, revealing smoother, fresher more vibrant skin
2. **Breaking down fat deposits –** helps release stubborn lumpy areas such as thighs and upper arms
3. **Stimulation –** increases natural moisture balance of your skin, boosting sweat and oil glands to work at their optimum best – helping keep skin healthy and free from breakouts.
4. **Circulation –** gives a surge of blood flow bringing fresh nutrients and oxygen exactly where you need it, improving the health, bounce and energy of your skin.
5. **Elimination/Detoxification –** helps the flow of lymph fluid throughout your body, removing toxins and boosting your natural immune system.

Your Lymphatic System

Your lymphatic system does not have a pump to push lymph fluid around your body. Instead, it relies on your body's movement to keep the flow going - a good reason to MOVE YOUR BODY as much as you can!

There are groups of lymph nodes around your body that facilitate lymphatic drainage and two major groups are in the armpits (axillary) and upper inner thighs (inguinal) area - the same areas many of us will want to focus on to aid with cellulite reduction!

Dry Body Brushing

Best done in the morning, perhaps before you shower.

- Begin at the soles of your feet
- Work up your calves, always brushing in the direction of your heart (upwards on legs). This is also the natural direction of your lymph system.
- Pay special attention to backs of thighs or areas of cellulite, using upward strokes.
- Before moving onto upper body, brush hands and arms, moving brush strokes towards the heart.
- Brush underarms too, and pay attention to backs of arms.
- Then brush your back, as much as you can, (or ask a partner to help).
- Finally, brush your tummy and chest – using **clockwise sweeps** on tummy, following the direction of your digestive system.

Adjust the pressure of the brush to the different parts of your body so it is comfortable. **To effect lymph flow, you only need enough pressure to get a slight drag on the skin.** It should feel **gentle**, but stimulating. You should see a rosy flush to the areas you have brushed. It's good to try to give a minimum of 3 minutes for whole body brushing – ideally 3 times a week.

Did you know?

Body brushing is especially beneficial to those who *sit in front of a computer* for hours every day. It increases positive electromagnetic energy levels and helps eliminate negative ions.

Things to note:

- Don't brush on broken or inflamed skin.
- Best not to share brushes with others – tell them to buy their own!
- Wash your brush in warm water (add a little shampoo if needed) every month and allow to fully air dry.

Wet vs. dry brushing

Most therapists recommend brushing on dry skin, pre-showering. **Dry** brushing is best if your goal is to **move the lymph and detoxify**! Wet brushing is still great for circulation. Sometimes wet skin is easier and less scratchy and you can do it immediately after a shower/bath before toweling dry. Choose what works for you, or try both!

What else can I do to help my lymphatic system (and my skin)?

Nutrition

Alkaline diets are a hot topic. They are used to help in cancer treatments and they help improve the natural health of your immune system. Alkalizing your diet benefits your skin too, so try to pile your plate with dark leafy greens, berries of all kinds, tomatoes and foods rich in lecithin (like eggs). Omega 3-rich foods and oils (fish, avocados, flax and hempseed oils) are perfect skin foods. And of course, drink half your body weight (in ounces) of water every day to help your system "flush". Herbs such as milk thistle, dandelion and drinking green tea will also help your natural detox process as they are great for your liver.

Exercise

Try to take some form of exercise that is aerobic to get your heart pumping and your lungs working hard. It doesn't have to be high impact, swimming is great too. If possible, try to do something that is outdoors so you are getting lungfuls of fresh, clean air. Breathe it in, deep down to the bottom of your lungs. Practice deep belly breaths using your diaphragm. We all tend to breathe using only the top of our lungs, so think about filling them from the very bottom right to the brim.

Emotional Exercise

There is a school of thought that toxicity and "holding on" to fatty deposits such as cellulite can be made worse by poor emotional health – "holding on" to feelings and thoughts that no longer serve us. Stress releases adrenalin and cortisol into our system, both of which need to be "exercised" out of your body or they can create toxic build up. Your emotional health is just as important as your physical health, so invest in YOU and give yourself a few minutes every day to calm down and focus on your feelings. Try a 10 minute mindfulness course – the app "Headspace" is a great way to begin practicing mindfulness with just a few minutes each day.

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