

UNDERSTANDING SUB-CONDITIONS

Sub-conditions describe how the skin is influenced by the changing seasons and factors such as where a person lives, the skincare products they use, the foods they eat, any medications they might be taking and if they have internal inflammation. While you can't change a skin type, sub-conditions *can* be addressed through lifestyle consistency, changes to their health and diet, and the products and treatments you recommend.

When designing your treatment plan, start by balancing and restoring the skin barrier, clearing up surface dryness and soothing and calming sensitive skin. Only then can you address any active sub-conditions like the different types of acne. Once you have that under control, then you can move onto improving the appearance of the skin by focusing on issues such as wrinkles, sun damage and couperose.

SURFACE DRYNESS

Using the wrong cleanser will dry, irritate or strip the outer layer of the skin, causing a painfully tight and squeaky-clean feeling. The skin will look shiny and have fine dehydration lines that look like wrinkles. Surface dryness acts as a barrier that traps oil and congestion inside the pores and keeps treatment products from being absorbed into the skin's deeper layers, where they'll be the most effective.

A very common issue, any skin type can be surface dry, even those that are oily and acne-prone.

How to treat it

Select a gentle non-foaming cleanser for your client, and talk to them about the importance of a thorough and consistent cleansing regimen. Double cleansing every night while massaging the cleanser into their face and neck for at least 30 seconds each time is the best way to balance the skin, leaving it feeling clean, soft and supple.

FOOD-RELATED CONGESTION/MILIA

As the skin is our largest organ of elimination, issues caused by food sensitivities can be seen here long before we experience any other symptoms. Food-related congestion typically presents as bumps under the skin that are deeper and harder to extract than the whiteheads that come from ineffective cleansing. Commonly caused by the body's reaction to dairy, gluten, egg yolks, soy milk, fish oils or peanuts in the diet, they usually appear first in the mid-cheek area and then spread down towards the jawline and onto the neck.

Milia are hard, white, fatty balls that build up over time as a result of the poor digestion of fatty foods. They can have an odor when they are extracted. Sometimes they can also form with the use of overly nourishing or occlusive products such as Vaseline, particularly around the eye area.

How to treat it

Skin analysis is key here. Once you've identified food-related congestion, you can talk to your client about avoiding the congestion-causing foods. They may also find it helpful to consult a nutritionist or a health practitioner.

CONGESTED BUMPS AND WHITEHEADS

Felt more on the surface of the skin than the deeper bumps of food-related congestion, this type of acne is caused by an inconsistent or ineffective cleansing regimen that leads to the build-up of dirt and grime, make-up and sunblock. Sweat left on the skin and excessive touching of the face can also be factors. These bumps can be found anywhere on the face and have a white head that is more easily extracted.

How to treat them

Thorough extractions will help with the immediate issue, but it's important to talk to your client about how they cleanse their skin. Demonstrate on your own face if necessary. Cleansing is 50% of a successful regimen, so they need to commit to being consistent with their cleansing if they want to see a change in their skin.

HORMONAL CYSTIC ACNE AND NODULES

Hormonal acne is marked by stubborn bursts of large nodules across the face, neck, chest or back that are always painful to the touch. You may also notice an over-abundance of facial hair. Incredibly common at all ages, this type of acne is caused by hormonal imbalances in the body and can be exacerbated by certain foods, medications, lifestyle choices and stress.

How to treat it

In your treatment room, you'll want to thoroughly cleanse and exfoliate the skin. Extractions are not always possible if the nodules are very deep – if this is the case, concentrate on soothing the skin and calming the infection by applying cryo sticks to the inflamed areas. You may need to see your client every two to four weeks until the active acne is minimized and under control. Make sure they are also being consistent with their cleansing regimen at home, and give them an active product to help soothe inflammation and disperse the deep infection, plus a healing and calming serum or moisturizer so the skin can heal quickly.

PIMPLES: PUSTULES AND PAPULES

Unlike hormonal acne, papules are a build-up of infection that is not painful. They will eventually develop a white head, which is when they become pustules. They're often caused by excess oil and can also be seen with rosacea, dermatitis or internal inflammation that shows as irritation or ruddiness on the skin. While they frequently appear in the T-zone, they can be seen anywhere on the face.

How to treat them

Good cleansing and exfoliation are important, both in the treatment room and in their homecare regimen. Choose products with BHA or AHAs, which offer good exfoliation while also killing bacteria. Take your time when doing extractions and make sure you get it all out – if infection is left inside, it will mark and leave a scar.

It's also important that your client's skin can 'breathe', so tell them not to wear close-fitting hats such as baseball caps, and to avoid comedogenic skincare products, make-up and thick hair treatments. Because the infection is very easy to spread, they should also be careful not to break open the pimples by picking or activities such as shaving.

BLACKHEADS

Blackheads are caused by overactive sebaceous glands. On an oily skin type, you'll find them covering the whole face: cheeks, forehead, chin, nose and even inside the ears. They're more likely to be found mainly in the T-zone on a combination/oily skin, while a combination/dry skin may have just a few blackheads, mostly on the nose and chin rather than the forehead or cheeks. A dry skin type will have no blackheads at all.

How to treat them

To lift blackheads out of the pores, you need an exfoliant that will absorb dead skin cells. AHAs and BHAs are great for that, as are papaya and pineapple enzymes. Another fantastic ingredient for cleaning out the pores and reducing congestion is carya ovata bark extract, or shagbark hickory, which is gentle on even the most sensitive skins.

LARGE PORES

These are simply pores that have become noticeably enlarged and visible. They're very often caused by not cleansing properly or not being consistent with your skincare regimen, which allows bacteria, dead cells and sebum to build up inside the pores and stretch them out. A lack of elasticity in the skin can also create the same effect.

How to treat them

You can absolutely shrink large pores with the right treatment. Make sure your client is following a thorough and consistent cleansing regimen, using an exfoliant that has a buffing effect on the epidermis and so will absorb dead cells, and applying a treatment serum or moisturizer with AHAs, BHA or retinoids. They will also benefit from regular facials so you can deeply clean and refine the pores.

DULL/FLAT/LIFELESS SKIN

Dull skin looks flat in color, may be blotchy, and has lost its 'bounce'. It happens when the skin is not getting enough nutrients, or as a result of an excessive lifestyle – smoking, late nights, poor sleep and overindulging with alcohol or sugar consumption can all be factors.

How to treat it

You can boost the skin with a good, brightening treatment plan that will repair its deeper layers. Choose active products with retinoids or AHAs to stimulate the fibroblast cells – it's important not to go too deep too quickly, so introduce them slowly and build up their use over time. Talk to your client to see if changes to their lifestyle are indicated, and design a good homecare regimen for them as well, to make sure they are feeding and supporting their skin.

WRINKLES

There are several different types of wrinkles. Premature wrinkles such as dehydration lines are caused by surface dryness or sun damage, while on a mature skin, you'll often see wrinkles resulting from a loss of collagen and elastin, as well as expression lines around the eyes, mouth and on the forehead.

How to treat them

Premature wrinkles will clear up once the skin's barrier is properly hydrated. Wrinkles on a mature skin that is lacking in tone cannot be removed entirely, but can be lessened with boosting treatments featuring AHAs or retinoids. Massage is very important here because it can stimulate the muscle tone and bring oxygen into the blood.

SUN DAMAGE

Sun spots and freckles caused by sun exposure can show up anywhere on the face and body, but particularly where the skin naturally catches the sun, either directly or indirectly. Sun damage also includes premature wrinkles and loss of skin tone.

How to treat it

You can lighten or fade sun damage with the right treatment plan – serums and moisturizers with antioxidants such as vitamin C, carrot juice and kojic acids can be used to brighten the skin. You can also use stronger AHAs in your treatments to stimulate the fibroblast cells, which will promote the production of collagen and elastin and support sun-damaged skin that has lost its tone and is looking loose. Be careful about using retinoids – they can also boost the fibroblast cells but can make the skin photo-sensitive. And make sure your client is applying a physical sunblock of at least SPF 40 every single day.

HYPERPIGMENTATION

Hyperpigmentation and melasma present as brown blotchiness on the face, appearing mostly on the forehead, cheekbones and around the mouth. More complicated and harder to treat than typical sun damage, it's caused not only by sun exposure but also hormonal changes or harsh chemical facial procedures.

How to treat it

It's important to nurture the skin – feed it nutrients like vitamins C, K or P, mulberry or licorice extract, alpha arbutin, kojic acid, carrot juice or arnica. You must never go too strong or deep too quickly with your treatment or use an AHA that is too aggressive, or you will burn the skin and make the blotchiness worse. Depending on the pH and formulation, glycolic, lactic, malic, mandelic or azelaic acids can work well, but tartaric and citric acids can aggravate the condition. Avoid using heat, steam and detoxifying treatments such as dead sea mud or seaweed as well, as they can stimulate the tyrosinase cycle of the melanocytes and make the skin blotchier.

SENSITIVE, FLAKY SKIN

When the skin feels tight, sensitive and in constant need of soothing and nourishing, there's often a seasonal or environmental cause such as winter skin – when you move from a cold, harsh outdoors to a dry, centrally heated indoors – or windburn. The skin can also be sensitized by using products that are too harsh or undergoing aggressive facial treatments. If the skin remains flaky, it may be caused by internal inflammation leading to irritations like ruddiness, eczema or psoriasis.

How to treat it

Restore and protect the skin barrier by simplifying their regimen: start with a gentle, non-foaming cleanser and a soothing, hydrating cream. Make sure they are not using actives or anything stimulating for the first two weeks of their treatment – no AHAs, BHA, retinoids, exfoliants or detoxifying products.

While eczema and psoriasis can be complicated, they can be calmed and soothed with the right products. Your client may also benefit from seeing a health practitioner or dermatologist.

ROSACEA

Rosacea is inflamed skin with red bumps and tiny pustules. There are many different levels of rosacea: it can be mild or very noticeable. It usually presents in your thirties, and flare-ups can be exacerbated by stress, hormones or certain foods and stimulants such as alcohol.

How to treat it

As with dermatitis and eczema, the best course of action for rosacea is a gentle homecare regimen using products designed to soothe the skin and cool and calm the redness.

A consultation with a health practitioner or dermatologist may also be helpful.

COUPEROSE

Commonly caused by poor circulation, smoking or sun damage, couperose is when dilated blood vessels cluster close to the surface of the skin around the nose and cheeks. It can also result from an injury to or surgery around the nose area, inflamed sinuses or excessive sneezing caused by allergies such as hayfever, or any build-up of pressure over time.

How to treat it

To help strengthen and repair the capillary walls, choose serums containing arnica, kojic acid or licorice extract and massage them well into the skin.