

EPISODE 262

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:21.4] AVH: Hey, everyone. Welcome to the Paleo Magazine Radio. Today's episode is going to be short and sweet like yours truly, because today instead of an interview, I'm going to review an article from our website that I found particularly interesting and useful. It's about skin health, which is something that should be important to all of us.

As you've probably heard before, it's the largest organ in the body, it's extremely absorptive and how our skin looks and feels can tell us a lot about our health and what's going on internally. This piece isn't so much about what we're putting in our body, because we talk about that all the time, this one is about what we're putting on it in terms of skin care, hair care, makeup, our tendency to sometimes maybe over wash or over sterilize or over clean ourselves.

I thought this was really useful. I wanted to read it out to you in case you don't head to the website very often, and read these great research articles for yourself. Which of course you should, because we're constantly putting up new content for you. A lot of it is exclusive to the website, so new recipes, there's giveaways all the time, great information. Make sure you bookmark paleomagazine.com, because if not, you're missing out.

Okay, so this piece is written by Eirik Garnas, he is a nutritionist, a science writer, a personal trainer and a health coach and he's written for a variety of health and fitness magazines and websites. You can learn more about him on his website darwinian-medicine.com.

Before I dive into the article, our show sponsor today is ShopAIP, which you may remember from literally last week's episode where I interview the founder about her very rare autoimmune disease and her journey to finding her health again. If you haven't listened to that one, go back to last week's episode and check it out. It's Episode 261.

ShopAIP is an online store that is the result of the founder Sandra Dorst, simply creating a resource that she felt was missing in the world and that she herself sorely needed. In 2014, she came down with a very rare autoimmune disorder. After years and a lot of hard work managing

her health through a number of avenues, including of course diet, she realized how crucial it was to follow an autoimmune protocol and how it can literally change your life, or save your life, in some cases for people with specific sensitivities.

She decided to create an online resource for people to find AIP-compliant treats and snacks and food and spices and condiments and skincare and much more. You can even buy bundles that make great gifts for people, so there's pre-made meal bundles, there's a baking bundle. All of it is anti-inflammatory. Much of it is paleo-friendly as well. Sandra is giving our listeners a discount for their first order. If you head to shopaip.com and use the code 'paleomag', you get 10% off. Head over, have a look, browse, look around. If you're my friend, please buy me some coconut crunch cereal or plantain chips. Thank you very much.

All right, that's it. Here is the article about healthy skin and a healthy skin microbiome and I hope you learn a little something.

[ARTICLE]

[0:03:26.1] AVH: *How Going Paleo Can Improve Your Skin Microbiome.*

Your skin is coated with a layer of fungi, bacteria and other microscopic life forms, all of which serve important functions within the biological systems of the organ. If this microbial community were to suddenly disappear or change dramatically, it would significantly compromise your skin's ability to ward off pathogens and keep your body healthy.

Unfortunately, this is what many contemporary humans seem to be doing to their skin intentionally or not. They are obviously not completely eradicating their skin microbes, but they're stimulating their skin in such ways that the skin microbiota becomes destabilized and degraded.

Often when we subject ourselves to novel, man-made substances meant to improve our health, the opposite results. The examples of this are numerous. Many of the things modern humans ingest and apply to their bodies have been shown to disturb normal, physiological processes. These substances include sugary foods, pharmaceutical drugs, trans fats and so forth.

The adverse effects induced by many of these agents are mediated by the microbiota. When we put a hazardous substance into or on our bodies, we're not just harming our own health, we're also harming the health and function of the microbiota. For example, smoking and hence breathing in all of the toxic compounds found in tobacco smoke changes the environment of the lungs. This inevitably triggers changes in the configuration of the respiratory microbiota.

Evolution never prepared the human body to harbor the types of microbiota that develop as a result of smoking. Hence, a conflict between the human and microbial components of the body arises, one which may result in inflammation and pulmonary disease. These types of processes don't just occur in the lungs, they can happen anywhere in the body. A lot of contemporary people, women in particular have bathroom cabinets filled with a variety of fragrance soaps, lotions, styling gels, shampoos and other products formulated for the skin or the hair.

Some of these products may be relatively harmless. However, others may induce adverse health effects. As a society, we've long been taught that soap, antibacterial gels help protect us from pathogens, but is this really true? What we often forget is that soap is very alkaline. It has a high pH. Our skin on the other hand is acidic, typically maintaining a pH below 5. The skin's ability to maintain a healthy microbiota is largely determined by its pH. If the pH is low, beneficial bacteria are able to attach to the surface of the skin, whereas pathogens have trouble establishing a presence there.

However, if the pH runs too high, beneficial bacteria are unable to colonize the skin. Pathogens on the other hand can take hold and cause infections. These mechanisms are not unique to the skin. For example, pH largely determines the state of the vaginal microbiota as well. If the pH is low and lactobacilli are creating enough lactic acid, opportunistic pathogens are kept at bay.

In a high pH scenario, these helpful bacteria are compromised and candida albicans and other potentially nasty critters can predominate. A single bout of hand-washing with soap won't permanently change the pH of your skin. However, it may transiently increase the pH, as well as change the skin's microbial landscape. If you wash your hands with harsh soap frequently, your skin's defenses may become weakened and bad bugs may get a chance to flourish.

Studies have shown the health care workers, a population that washes its hands with soap very frequently, exhibit hand microbiota that are dysbiotic and rich in pathogens. These individuals are particularly prone to picking up harmful microbes, because many pathogens are present in their work environments.

In order to avoid the spread of pathogens, many health care workers frequently use antibacterial gels. Unfortunately, the strategy doesn't seem to be working. Actually, it may be making the situation worse. When we rub our hands with antibacterial products, we may get rid of certain microbes that have the potential to cause us harm. However, we may also damage our skin's microbial community as a whole and invite opportunistic pathogens.

Putting anti-bacterial gels your skin is somewhat analogous to taking oral antibiotics, killing some potentially bad bacteria, but setting yourself up for a whole host of other problems in the process. We may think that anti-bacterial products protect us from harmful bacteria, but they may actually make us more prone to infections.

To clarify, I'm not asserting that soap, antibacterial gels and other products that are used to clean the skin are never useful. In hospitals for example, the pathogen load is high and hygienic measures need to be in place to avoid the spread of pathogens between patients and staff. In contrast, the average Joe doesn't need to use any bacterial gels or wash his hands every few hours with soap.

Actually, doing so may undermine rather than enhance his protection against pathogens. In the industrialized world, virtually everyone uses soap, shampoo, conditioner and other similar skin and hair products on a regular basis. It's considered normal to put creams and lotions on our skin and wash and style our hair. Hence, a lot of people may find it surprising to hear that these practices may be doing them more harm than good.

Moreover, they may be reluctant to eliminate or reduce their use of cosmetics, soaps and other body care products due to their desire for better hygiene. What we must acknowledge though is that the practice of applying a bunch of man-made products to our skin and hair is evolutionarily novel.

Hunter-gatherers, both contemporary and ancient obviously don't have hair gels, soap or shampoo, but they still stay attractive and healthy and find mates. Actually, they seem to be doing better than we are in some respects. Typically, hunter-gatherers have healthy skin and a diverse robust microbiota. Some hunter-gatherers, particularly the very young die from infections, but that's not because they didn't wash their hands with soap, rather is because they lack access to modern medicine.

The environments in which contemporary humans live are very different from Paleolithic environments. We are not necessarily best off replicating every aspect of our hunter-gatherer fore-bearer's lifestyles. However, we can obviously learn a lot from them.

Human skin is perfectly capable of functioning on its own. It doesn't need to be slathered with harsh soap, antibacterial gels or other products. Indeed, doing so may harm rather than strengthen the skin's natural defenses. Instead of focusing so much on getting rid of bad bacteria, we should probably focus on nurturing the good.

The bottom-line, we should be cautious about the amounts and types of products we put on our skin and in our hair. This is true for all types of skin and hair care products, including cosmetics and other beauty aids, any bacterial lotions, moisturizers and so forth. Many of these products, in particular those which contain a long list of unpronounceable ingredients, may accelerate the aging process, destabilize the skin microbiota and interfere with the skin's natural ability to maintain healthy levels of moisture.

As a general rule, less is more. If you want to go fully paleo with your hygiene, it is helpful to purge your bathroom cabinet of products with synthetic chemicals, replace harsh soaps with pH-neutral alternatives and reduce your overall use of body care products to give your skin a break.

[END OF ARTICLE]

[0:10:00.4] AVH: Thanks everybody for listening. Thank you to ShopAIP for sponsoring the episode. If you are on an autoimmune protocol diet, or you just want to browse and try some healthy, anti-inflammatory food options, head to shopaip.com, use the code `paleomag` and you will get 10% off your first order. Sounds like a smart idea.

All right, next week we're talking about PEMF, or Pulsed Electromagnetic Field Therapy. If you don't know what that is, I guess you just have to subscribe to the podcast and make sure you tune in next week. That's it, short and sweet. Have a great day everybody.

[OUTRO]

[0:10:30.8] AVH: The intro music for Paleo Magazine Radio is a song called Stronger performed by Alter Ego and I hope you love it.

[END]