



HOW EXERCISE IS WRECKING YOUR SKIN

'Jogger's face' has always been our way to justify steering clear of marathon running — but could yoga and spin prove equally age-accelerating? By EUGENIE KELLY

Jacqueline Brennan, a therapist at Inskin Medi Spa, Sydney, adds that all the booked-out infra-red saunas across town are equally worrying. "Infra-red heat can worsen a person's melasma," she states. Though there are positives. "They're fantastic for conditions like acne and eczema."

"[Infra-red saunas] are a bit of a double-edged sword," Sheridan agrees. "Because the energy can penetrate deeply into the body, proponents say this heat benefits deep tissues such as muscles, but detractors say this opens up the potential for deep tissue damage."

If you're not prone to pigmentation and are feeling slightly smug sitting there reading this, Sheridan adds that although heat won't increase your risk of cancer like UV, its other effects — the dilation of blood vessels and the stimulation of sweat glands — can result in other problems. "At extremes, heat may even melt and break down collagen, elastin and other tissues."

So is the answer to ditch hot yoga and take up marathons? According to celebrity dermatologist Dr Neil Sadick, whose clients include the *Real Housewives of New York*, "Strenuous running increases cortisol secretion from the adrenal glands." (Which in turn is believed to break down your collagen and elastin.) And it gets worse. The jarring action of running leads to jowls. "It places stress on the supporting ligaments that house the fat pads of the face, and this means volume loss and distortion," Sheridan concurs.

Switzerland-based scientist Dr Jacqueline Hill is the beauty brains behind La Prairie's new Skin Caviar Absolute Filler, which, admittedly, is eye-wateringly expensive at \$755, but if you're serious about plumping skin that has lost density from exercise, hand on heart, the stuff works. "Under stress conditions, significant increases in cortisol can have a major impact on the skin's immune system, epidermal barrier function recovery and wound-healing processes," Hill explains. "Cortisol increases DNA damage, interferes with DNA repair and affects your cell cycle. Absolute Filler helps to soothe the skin and strengthen the epidermal barrier function."

As to whether I should cancel my hot-yoga membership pronto (we ask all the hard-hitting questions here at *Harper's BAZAAR*), Hill concludes: "Heat clearly has the potential to negatively impact the skin, and the term 'thermal ageing' was coined to reflect that. Heat has been shown to increase the number of mast cells [a type of white blood cell] and your MMPs [enzymes that degrade collagen and elastin], which eventually leads to elastose, which is damaged fibres in your dermis, which is what you typically see in sun-damaged skin." Fabulous. So, who's up for a power walk, then? ■

In my body-beautiful-obsessed neighbourhood, rife with boutique studios, there's one workout everyone's especially fixated on right now. Heated vinyasa yoga. And I get it. The moving meditation aspect is bliss, the 30-degree-plus temperature adds an extra intensity, and as for my newly chiselled chaturanga arms ... sorry, but you just don't get that kind of shredding from a plain old push-up.

Yet something has definitely happened to my skin. And it's not good. Pigmentation patches. Pronounced jowls. And a crepiness on my forearms and lower legs that, despite regular dunks in vats of shea butter, still looks dry. A sweat-fest, whether it be in a heated yoga studio, a heart-pumping spin class or running outdoors in summer, was once thought to be the ultimate detox. But dermatologists and facialists are now speculating that the heat associated with these workouts could prove just as damaging as UV exposure. As for the conclusive scientific evidence backing all of this up ... well, apart from an oft-quoted study by Seoul National College University of Medicine a few years back, the data doesn't exist. But that's not to say experts don't see a link.

Dr Adam Sheridan, who is a spokesperson for the Australasian College of Dermatologists, says the heat generated by these workouts will never prove as damaging as UV rays, though excessive heat will result in oxidative stress. "This causes cellular DNA damage and inflammation. Your melanocytes [pigment-creating cells] produce and deposit increased amounts of melanin [pigment], but the healthy turnover and removal of this is reduced with DNA damage of the surrounding skin cells, whose function is now compromised."

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— DR JACQUELINE HILL