

Joe Linn Massage Newsletter

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Spotting Skin Conditions

John Otrompke

Being aware of the first signs of skin conditions will help you know when it's time to visit a doctor. Here is a short refresher on five of the most important signs you might see.

1. Butterfly Rash

This is a facial rash characterized by its shape: the middle part of the butterfly is on the bridge of the nose, with "wings" extending onto the cheeks. "It can signify a range of diseases, from milder conditions like rosacea, significant acne, eczema, and psoriasis, all the way to serious autoimmune connective tissue disorders such as lupus," says Joseph Jorizzo, MD, professor and founding chair of the dermatology department at the Wake Forest University School of

Both viral and bacterial infections may appear as pustules, or tender lesions. They can sometimes look like acne, but may also be bigger or more isolated than a pimple, Weinstein says.

3. Patchy Hair

Be alert for round, patchy areas of hair loss, which can be a sign of an autoimmune disease called alopecia areata, Jorizzo says. "Alopecia is associated with thyroid disease, but it can also be upsetting to the patient in and of itself," Jorizzo explains. "Prognosis is very good if there is just one little circle, but if they lose their eyebrows or eyelashes, or if it goes around the bottom of the scalp, the condition is likely to be more chronic."

*Take care of
your body, it's
the only place
you have to
live in!*



Your therapist is in a unique position to identify skin conditions.

Medicine in Salem, North Carolina.

2. Infections

"Look for any sign of infection, such as a cold sore, which is characterized by a painful bump or blister on the face or nose," says Jill Weinstein, MD, clinical instructor of dermatology at Northwestern University in Chicago. "This may be caused by herpes simplex."

4. Symptoms on the Nails

Nails may also offer evidence of a medical condition. "Signs on the nails include a condition called clubbing, where there's body under the cuticle that changes the angle of the nail, so that it's like an upside down V," Jorizzo says. Clubbing is sometimes accompanied by

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Office Hours and Contact

Joe Linn Massage

Joe Linn

415-497-3176

By appointment only

Hours available Monday - Saturday

Call today to schedule your massage.

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edema, and the cuticle area may feel wet. It can be a symptom of several lung conditions, ranging from chronic bronchitis to lung cancer.

Pits in the nails can be a sign of arthritis or psoriasis. Pits resemble a mere dent, perhaps 1 millimeter across. Jorizzo explains, "In psoriasis, the outer layers of skin turn over very quickly, and when they come from under the cuticle, little patches fall off, so you get a pit."

Finally, a single dark black streak in the nail that comes up on to the cuticle can be a sign of melanoma.

5. Skin Cancer

The most common source of skin cancer deaths is melanoma, which may be identified using the ABCDE criteria:

Asymmetry. The mole is an unusual shape, not round.

Border Irregularity. The edges of the mole may be jagged, scalloped, or wavy, or very sharp in one area.

Color. The mole shows variation in color from one area to another. There may be multiple shades of tan, brown, black, white, blue, or red.

Diameter. The mole is greater than 6 millimeters in diameter.

Evolving. The mole is new, or an existing mole has changed in size, shape, or color.

A more informal method of spotting a suspicious mole is called the Ugly Duckling Test: when a mole just seems to catch your attention for some reason.

"The classic example is when someone has one thing on them that just doesn't look like any other spot on their body," explains Elizabeth Quigley, MD, a physician in the dermatology service at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New Jersey. "Let's say they have many black moles, but one brown mole. Or most of their moles are round and small, but they have one that is big and a different shape. That should be evaluated by a physician."

The most common form of skin cancer is basal cell carcinoma. There are also some less common varieties that have different symptoms. "Basal cell carcinoma often presents in the form of shiny or pearly bumps, which patients think are pimples," says Quigley. If the lesion has been there for six months, and sometimes bleeds, that's a warning sign that it is not a pimple.

Squamous cell carcinoma, responsible

for about 20 percent of all skin cancer deaths, has symptoms that are quite different from those of melanoma. "Squamous cell carcinoma can present as firm bumps, scaly patches, or ulcers that don't get better. The skin is red and the scale is the kind that doesn't go away with moisturizer," Quigley says. "It's different from just dry skin, and the scale is usually thicker." She says squamous cells don't rub off like normal dry skin, and the scaly patch may bleed if it is removed by pulling or picking.

Keep in mind that these are only guidelines, and you should have any concerns checked out by a qualified health-care professional. Knowing the warning signs can be valuable, but nothing replaces a doctor's expertise.

John Otrompke is a health-care writer and consultant.



A possible skin cancer mole.

The Art of Bathing

Simple Recipes to Soothe Mind and Body

From bubble baths to essential oils to Dead Sea salts, prepared bath products are designed to enhance a bathing experience, but they can be expensive. Instead of spending the extra money on special bath products, try one of these natural, simple bath recipes with ingredients you probably already have in your cupboard or refrigerator.

Epsom Salts

ADD 2 CUPS EPSOM SALTS TO BATH WATER.

Magnesium sulfate, or Epsom salts, has been used for centuries as a folk remedy, and research now confirms its numerous benefits. The second most abundant element in human cells and a crucial component for bone health, magnesium is also needed for muscle control, energy production, and the elimination of toxins. Magnesium eases stress, aids sleep, and improves concentration while reducing inflammation, joint pain, and muscle cramps. Sulfates help to flush toxins from the body, prevent or reduce headaches, and even improve brain function.

Most American diets are deficient in magnesium. However, one of the best ways to boost dietary intake is by bathing in Epsom salts, which are readily absorbed through the skin.

Milk

ADD 2-4 CUPS MILK OR BUTTERMILK TO BATH WATER.

Rich in calcium, protein, and vitamins, milk replenishes the skin, while lactic acid found in milk acts as a natural exfoliant. A member of the alpha hydroxy acid family, lactic acid breaks the glue-like bonds between the outer layer of dead skin cells. Soak in a milk bath for 20 minutes, then gently scrub skin with a loofah or washcloth.

Honey

ADD 1/4 CUP HONEY TO BATH WATER.

A fragrant, natural humectant, honey helps skin attract and retain moisture. Its antibacterial and anti-irritant properties make it an ideal cleansing and soothing additive to a warm bath.



Turn your home bath into a spa experience.

The Scoop on Meditation

A Simple Practice with Profound Benefits

People who meditate regularly appear internally and externally five to 10 years younger than their non-meditating peers, according to author Deepak Chopra. That's good news for the estimated 10 million people who practice meditation on an ongoing basis and experience the resulting calm it cultivates.

The rich benefits come from doing something that looks like nothing: Sitting still, being quiet, and breathing deeply. Meditation works simply but profoundly by defusing the onslaughts of life -- a racing mind, busyness, deadlines, commutes, all of which have physiological effects on well-being. Meditation calms the nervous system, decreases metabolic rate, heart rate, and blood pressure, and lowers levels of cholesterol, stress hormones, and free

radicals. It also has a direct effect on breathing, slowing and deepening respiration so more oxygen circulates throughout the body. Not only that, meditation is said to lessen feelings of anxiety and depression and improve memory and concentration. And all of this culminates in slowing the aging process, as Chopra notes.

There are many meditation techniques, including focusing on a mantra, a sacred word or phrase, or your breath. But the basic intent of all meditation is focus and attention. And it doesn't take hours a day in an ashram to meditate effectively. Benefits kick in with even a short period of devoted time.

How to begin? Wear comfortable, unrestrictive clothes, sit on a cushion or chair with your back straight (think once

again, comfort), rest your hands on your legs, let your eyes go soft and out of focus or close them, breathe slowly and deeply, and -- the hardest part -- attempt to empty your mind of thoughts and quiet the internal dialogue. When thoughts flit through your mind, let them pass without judging them and come back to your focus (your mantra, counting, etc.) and breathing.

Start with this sitting meditation technique for five minutes a day, and add on time as you get more at ease with the process. For more information on techniques and benefits, check out www.abc-of-meditation.com.

Keep Calm and Book a Massage!

Welcome September! Another summer has come and gone. I hope all of you had as much fun as I did. Once again I have tried to share some articles that I hope you will enjoy. "Spotting Skin Conditions" provides five ways to spot and identify a variety of skin conditions. As a massage therapist I am always on the lookout for any skin condition you might not be aware of especially in areas like your back that you cannot see.

"The Art of Bathing: Simple Recipes to Soothe Mind and Body" offers 3 wonderful ways to enjoy a hot bath. I personally enjoy using Epsom salts to relieve my aches and pains when I have overdone myself.

"The Scoop on Meditation: A Simple Practice with Profound Benefits" shows how five minutes a day can change our lives. When I was training to become a massage therapist, meditation was a regular part of my training. Now I enjoy a walking meditation each morning and my regular massages as an opportunity to let go of my everyday stress and just be still.

I am offering a Back to School special this month, for all the Moms, Dads and teachers to find a chance to escape the stresses of everyday. So book your 1-hour massage for only \$65 (save \$10). This offer is good for one time in September only.

Joe Linn Massage

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