

ELLE

**THE
MAKEOVER
ISSUE
NEW YEAR
NEW YOU!
LOSE WEIGHT,
SLEEP BETTER,
& GET
PERFECT
SKIN**

SPRING FASHION PREVIEW

ELLE BEAUTY BODY HEALTH

SPOTLIGHT ON: PROBIOTICS

Earlier this year, a team of microbiologists confirmed that people are packed with bacteria. "There are 10 bacterial organisms in the body for every human cell," says lead researcher Steven R. Gill, PhD, an associate professor of microbiology at the University of Buffalo in New York. Thankfully, according to Gill, the majority of these bacteria are good for us.

Friendly probiotics ("for life" in Greek) support immune function by helping to fight disease-causing bacteria. The most well-known probiotic, lactobacillus (found in many yogurts and dairy products), treats and prevents yeast infections, irritable bowel syndrome, diarrhea, and urinary tract infections. The latest studies show that probiotics also inhibit eczema, ward off the common cold, and, when topically applied, may prevent and reduce signs of aging.

Topical probiotics work in several ways: They're a line of defense for the skin, creating a protective barrier by blocking some UV rays and pollution. They function as decoys, luring acne-causing bacteria away from skin cells. ("Beneficial bacteria attach to the body and block harmful pathogens that could infect or aggravate skin," says Decker Weiss, a naturopathic physician in Scottsdale, Arizona.) Finally, probiotics release by-products that promote wound healing and seem to reduce inflammation. In vitro and in vivo studies with mice performed at the National University of Tucumán in Argentina verified that probiotic organisms aid tissue repair in pathogen-infected burns. "In theory, anything that stimulates wound repair also promotes collagen production," says Diane Berson, MD, an assistant professor of dermatology at

Cornell Medical College in New York City.

Unfortunately, most every beauty item, from cleansers to chemical peels, obliterates all bacteria, helpful and harmful, which is why rinsing with plain water works so well for those with sensitive complexions. Holistic healers have long recommended mixing acidophilus or bulgaricus powders with water to create a do-it-yourself mask that will recolonize the face with probiotics.

Now prepackaged skin care may deliver a boost of good bacteria. Verattiva Eye Care Serum (far left) contains a patented probiofactor complex, which the company claims will strengthen the tissue's immune response, in an aloe vera base. Four in-house studies done by Bioelements, which just launched Probotix Anti-Aging Serum (near left), made with the beneficial bacteria in a skin-calming milk protein lotion, demonstrated that topical probiotics reduce irritation, decrease UV-induced chemical damage, increase cellular function, and inhibit the formation of wrinkles. "In principle, probiotic creams might work," says Arielle Kauvar, MD, an associate professor of dermatology at the New York University School of Medicine in NYC, "but placebo-controlled, double-blind studies are lacking since the field is so new."

Bioelements and Verattiva have engineered their formulas to remain active and stable for 12 months and 36 months, respectively, after the products are opened. But will you get enough bacteria to make a difference? "Probiotic bacteria are very fragile," says Neil Sadick, MD, a clinical professor of dermatology at the Weill Cornell Medical College in NYC. "But in high concentrations, they have a fighting chance." —MEAGHAN SCHWARTING

ELLE BEAUTY SHOPPING GUIDE



78



THE ONLY GUIDE
YOU'LL EVER NEED!

JANUARY 2007
USA \$3.99
CANADA \$4.99



ER
DY
ON
RST
BABY
S—
HE
ER
CKI
S
?
OL
KS
—
M!
HIP
ER
S
R:
DE
SY
ET
AN
ST
ES