

TO YOUR HEALTH

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What causes muscle cramps during exercise?

Athletes, coaches and health enthusiasts may want to look at the playing surface

BY MICHAEL HALES
Kennesaw State University

THE CONVERSATION — For athletes across all sports, few experiences are as agonizing as being forced to leave competition with a sudden muscle cramp. These painful, uncontrolled spasms — formally known as exercise-associated muscle cramps — have frustrated athletes, coaches and researchers for decades.

Scientists have traditionally attributed exercise-induced cramps to dehydration or electrolyte imbalances. However, this theory left unanswered questions. For example, many well-hydrated athletes experience cramps, while others competing in hot, humid conditions remain unaffected.

A growing body of research is challenging this explanation, pointing instead to the playing surface as a critical factor.

In my work as a sports scientist, I study how different variables affect athletic performance. Work from my team has found that specific qualities of playing surfaces can lead to early neuromuscular fatigue and unexpected muscle cramps.

Muscle cramps and playing surfaces

As muscles fatigue, the normal balance between signals in the nervous system that direct muscles to contract and relax become disrupted. Muscle spindles, which sense stretch, increase their firing rate. Meanwhile, inhibitory feedback from Golgi tendon organs — a part of the nervous system at the intersection of muscle fibers and tendons — declines.

In other words, muscles are getting mixed signals about whether to contract or relax. The result is excessive activation of motor neurons that stimulate muscle fibers into a sustained, involuntary contraction — a cramp.

Recent studies suggest that competing on surfaces with unfamiliar mechanical properties — such as stiffness and elasticity — can accelerate neuromuscular fatigue. Surfaces alter the mechanics of your muscles and joints. If your neuromuscular system is not accustomed to these demands, fatigue can prematurely set in and create the conditions for cramping.

In one study, my team and I found a 13% difference in muscle activity among runners performing on fields of varying stiffness and elasticity. Another study from my team found a 50% difference in hamstring activity among athletes performing identical drills on different types of turf.

Beyond sports-specific performance metrics, biomechanics research has long shown that altering the properties of playing surfaces changes muscle stiffness, joint loading and range of motion. These variables directly affect fatigue. Muscles crossing multiple joints such as the hamstrings appear especially vulnerable to variations in playing surfaces, given their central role in sprinting and cutting.

Preventing cramps during exercise

If playing surfaces influence fatigue, then managing how they interact with players could help prevent cramps.

Researchers have proposed developing regional databases cataloging the mechanical characteristics of competition surfaces for sports such as tennis. With this data, coaches and sports organizations could tailor training environments to mimic competitive conditions, reducing the shock of unfamiliar surfaces. It's not necessarily the inherent properties of the surface that causes cramping, but rather how similar or different they are from what an athlete is used to.

Consider a soccer team that practices on a soft surface but competes on a

more stiff surface. Without preparation, the shift in how their muscles will be used may lead to premature fatigue and cramps during competition. By incorporating drills that replicate how athletes' muscles will be activated on competition turf could help the team better prepare for game conditions.

Similarly, a basketball team accustomed to new hardwood may benefit from training sessions on worn or cushioned courts that simulate upcoming away venues.

The key is systematic exposure. Conditioning on surfaces that replicate competitive demands acclimatizes the neuromuscular system, lowering fatigue risk and potentially reducing the risk of cramps.

Toward a holistic approach to cramps

Hydration and nutrition remain essential for performance. But accounting for conditioning, footwear traction and adaptation to different playing surfaces could help sports medicine move toward a more complete solution to exercise-as-

sociated muscle cramps.

With continued research and technology development, cramps may no longer need to be a frustrating inevitability. Instead, athletes and coaches could anticipate them, adjust training to match surface demands, and take steps to prevent them before they derail performance.

The future of cramp prevention may lie in real-time monitoring. Advances in a combination of wearable biosensors to detect neuromuscular fatigue, surface testing equipment and machine learning could help predict individualized cramp risk. Coaches might then adjust practice plans, make in-game substitutions or even adapt surface conditions when possible.

By better preparing athletes for the mechanical demands of competition surfaces, teams may protect their athletes' health and ensure top performers are available when the game is on the line.

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‘Tummy time’ is not just for babies

BY AVERY NEWMARK
Atlanta Journal-Constitution

When you hear “tummy time,” you probably think of babies on colorful mats learning to lift their heads. But the same practice is now making waves with adults — and for good reason.

Physical therapists and posture experts say spending a few minutes on your stomach can help undo the aches and stiffness that come from hours hunched over laptops and phones. And with nearly 65% of people working from home reporting neck or back pain, it's no wonder the baby-inspired exercise is trending.

The basics

Adult tummy time is exactly what it sounds like: lying on your stomach for short stretches of time. You can do it flat on the floor, on a yoga mat or even propped up slightly on your forearms in a “cobra” or “sphinx” position.

The goal is to reverse the hunched-forward, “C,” posture that comes from hours at a desk, on your phone or behind the wheel.

Why it helps

Spending time on your stomach encourages spinal extension, opens the chest and shoulders and stretches the hip flexors — all areas that tighten when you sit too much.

“While no clinical trials are known to investigate by name ‘adult tummy time,’

the fundamental principles and interventions are strongly evidence-based,” Leah Verebes, a physical therapist and assistant professor at Touro University School of Health Sciences, explained to Health.

Inspire Health in Atlanta echoes the sentiment, noting in a Facebook video: “Adult tummy time isn’t just trending, it’s something your PT and Pilates instructor has been encouraging for years! Prone work (aka lying on your stomach) strengthens the muscles of your posterior chain — think glutes, spinal stabilizers, and shoulder girdle. All of these muscles are essential for posture, movement, and long-term joint health.”

How to try it

Lie on your stomach and prop up on your forearms. From there, try lifting your arms or legs off the ground, or try adding gentle stretches, according to Everyday Health. If it feels uncomfortable, place a pillow under your chest or hips. Over time, you can work up to longer sessions or pair tummy time with mobility work.

If you already experience back or neck pain, or the exercise causes discomfort, skip it and consult your doctor. It's also not recommended if you've had a recent injury.

While it might feel a little funny at first, adult tummy time is a low-effort reset you can do almost anywhere. Those few minutes on your stomach can help undo hours of forward-leaning posture.



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Beauty sleep isn't a myth

Expert explains how rest keeps your skin healthy and youthful

BY JOANNA FONG-ISARIYAWONGSE
The Conversation

Have you ever woken up after a night of poor sleep, glanced in the mirror and thought, “I look tired?”

You're not imagining it.

I am a neurologist who specializes in sleep medicine. And though “beau-

ty sleep” may sound like a fairy tale, a growing body of research confirms that sleep directly shapes how our skin looks, how youthful it appears and even how attractive others perceive us to be.

What happens during sleep

Sleep is not just down time. Your body moves through distinct stages that

serve different restorative functions. Deep, slow-wave sleep is the primary stage during which the body prioritizes tissue repair, muscle recovery and collagen production.

Growth hormone is released during this sleep stage, with most daily secretion occurring in the early part of the night. This hormone drives the body's repair and rebuilding processes, helping to heal tissues, restore muscles and boost the production of collagen, the protein that keeps skin firm and elastic.

Slow-wave sleep also creates a unique hormonal environment that benefits the skin. Cortisol, the body's main stress hormone, falls to its lowest point during this stage. Lower cortisol protects collagen, reduces inflammation and supports the skin barrier.

At the same time, higher levels of growth hormone and prolactin, a hormone that helps regulate the immune system and cell growth, enhance immune function and tissue repair, helping skin recover from daily stressors.

The skin-sleep connection

The skin is your body's largest organ, and it works hard while you sleep. Adequate sleep promotes hydration and barrier function, helping your skin maintain moisture and resist irritation. In contrast, sleep deprivation increases water loss through the skin, leaving it drier and more vulnerable to damage and visible signs of aging.

Sleep also plays a role in acne, a common skin condition that affects people of all ages. Poor sleep can raise inflammation and stress hormones such as cortisol, both of which may worsen breakouts. Consistent, restorative sleep, on the other hand, supports your skin's ability to regulate oil production and recover from irritation.

Collagen repair and elasticity also depend heavily on adequate rest. In one study, short-term sleep restriction, defined as just three hours of sleep per night for two nights in a row, reduced skin elasticity and made wrinkles more noticeable.

Chronic sleep deficiency, also known in sleep medicine as insufficient sleep syndrome, refers to getting fewer than seven hours of sleep per night for at least three months, accompanied by daytime fatigue or impaired functioning. This state disrupts collagen produc-

tion, weakens the skin barrier and fuels low-grade inflammation that undermines healing.

Studies show that the hormonal disruptions that occur with sleep loss elevate cortisol and accelerate oxidative stress, an imbalance between cell-damaging molecules and the body's defenses, while impairing the very processes that keep skin resilient.

Over time, these changes accelerate biological aging and leave the body less resilient to daily stressors.

Your face tells the story

Sleep loss does not only affect how skin functions. It also changes how the face appears to others. Controlled studies show that even after a few nights of reduced sleep, others consistently rated them as less attractive, less healthy and more fatigued. Common cues include paler skin, darker under-eye circles, red or swollen eyes, drooping eyelids and downturned mouth corners.

These signals are subtle but socially significant. Observers are less inclined to interact with or approach someone who looks sleep-deprived. Sleep also affects empathy and aesthetic perception, meaning that people who are well rested not only view others more positively but are also, in turn, viewed more positively by others.

This reciprocal effect may help explain why job interviewers, dates, or even friends tend to respond more favorably to a well-rested face.

Sleep even influences how we perceive ourselves. People with poor sleep often report lower satisfaction with their own appearance.

Supporting your health

Prioritizing sleep is a powerful and accessible way to support appearance and overall health. So the next time you consider trading sleep for a few extra hours of work or entertainment, remember that your skin, your health and even your social presence will benefit from those hours of rest.

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Stepping back from screens and starting a hobby

NEW YORK (AP) — During the winter of 2024, Rachel Martin came to a startling realization: She spent most of her free time staring at screens. “I couldn’t really think of hobbies or things that I did that took a break from the digital world,” she said.

With pastimes like watching television, playing video games and creating digital art, Martin, 33, sometimes spent more than 12 hours per day looking at screens. She longed for an analog alternative.

After some trial and error, she found one: journaling with fountain pens and specialty inks. “It’s quite a cool tactile experience,” she said, and one that unexpectedly turned social when she started attending meetups for fountain pen enthusiasts in her city of Sydney, Australia.

“It’s something that I definitely didn’t expect to love,” she said, “but that actually really helped me with going (mostly) screen-free.”

Martin had extra motivation for avoiding devices — she has chronic migraines, and screens are a trigger for her — but many people share her goal.

Adopting a new hobby can be an effective way to get a break from screens. (Martin is even looking into selling her



AP Illustration / Peter Hamlin

As screens fill more and more of people’s lives, many are beginning to find ways to step back from the glow of blue light.

A mix of enjoyable activities is fine

Some people feel pressured to find the “ideal” hobby that will perfectly optimize their free time — but there’s no such thing, said Sarah Pressman, a professor of psychological science at the University of California, Irvine who has studied leisure time.

“Having a mix of small enjoyable activities — a little bit of pickleball, cooking something new, chatting with a friend over coffee, spending some time in your garden — can have a cumulative effect on your mood and health,” she said. “So rather than putting pressure on yourself to find the perfect pastime, just ask, ‘What brings me a little joy today?’”

Similarly, hobbies don’t have to fill hours upon hours of time to be beneficial, said Matthew Zawadzki, an associate professor of psychological sciences at the University of California, Merced who has studied hobbies.

Start small by thinking about activities that would be fulfilling for 20, 10 or even five minutes at a time.

“We really need to embrace small engagements with our leisure,” he said, particularly given how many other demands there are on our time.

A pastime may not reset your life, “but instead it’s going to reset the next hour,” Zawadzki said.

Try lots of things

“Test out a few activities for 30 minutes each and just notice how they make you feel,” Pressman said. “Think of it like dating. You may have to go on a few first dates before you find your match.”

Think about how activities you loved as a child could be adapted for adulthood, or about things that you naturally lose track of time while doing, she suggested.

It can also be helpful to consider what you’re missing, or want more of, in your daily routine, Zawadzki said. If you feel too sedentary, try a new form of fitness. If you need to get out of your head, pick up an engrossing book. If you feel starved for social connection, join a club or volunteer. If you haven’t used your creative muscles in a while, pick up a paintbrush.

Ask for recommendations

“It’s hard to think past what we currently do,” Zawadzki said. So, outsource your search.

Just as you’d ask a friend for a book or movie recommendation, ask your loved ones which activities they’d recommend for someone with your interests and tastes. Make sure they’re aware of any financial, time or space constraints, too.

Make your hobbies as accessible as screen time

If you’re used to spending your evening in front of the TV, it can be hard to put those hours to new use — even once you’ve found a rewarding hobby.

“Screens are so easy,” said Gabriela Tonietto, an associate professor of marketing at Rutgers Business School who has studied leisure time.

So, keep your sketchpad or crossword puzzle in plain sight rather than stored away, Pressman suggested, and flow directly from work or dinner into hobby time before you get distracted by screens.

Setting specific goals (not just, “I want to reduce screen time,” but something like, “I will read for an hour before bed”), carving out designated time for your activity, and enlisting a hobby buddy for accountability can all help you stick to your pastime, Tonietto said.

Don’t beat yourself up if the screens sometimes win

Screen time isn’t inherently bad, Zawadzki said. Watching a movie with your family can be a bonding activity — especially if you talk about it afterward — and catching up with a juicy TV show on the treadmill may motivate you to exercise.

“Any kind of activity has the potential to be positive,” he said. “But you have to optimize it a little bit to serve your goals,” and set a cap on how much time you spend vegging out.

So don’t be too hard on yourself if you can’t totally quit your screen-based hobbies. They may have some benefits too — and recognizing them is half the battle. Tonietto’s research suggests that viewing leisure time as wasteful can make it less enjoyable and beneficial.

“Step one is actually experiencing that positivity when you engage in these activities,” Tonietto said. “The consequences of that are feeling more relaxed, feeling less stressed, feeling happier.”



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Study shows genetic testing should be routine for adults

BY KAYLA YUP
The Philadelphia Inquirer

PHILADELPHIA — The first time the seemingly healthy woman gave birth, she went into heart failure. She recovered and went on to deliver her second child a few years later. Doctors cleared the woman to go home with her newborn.

But within months, the woman in her early 20s was rushed back to the hospital, again in heart failure, and ultimately died in a Penn Medicine intensive care unit.

Several years later, a new study has solved the mystery behind her decline: an undiagnosed genetic condition.

The woman is one of many adults whose fates could possibly have been changed with a DNA test. The study, published in *The American Journal of Human Genetics*, found that one in four adult patients in intensive care units across the Penn health system had a genetic condition linked to the medical issue for which they were admitted. Half were unknown at the time.

“I thought it would be a concerning number, but this was larger than even I thought it was going to be,” said Theodore Drivas, a medical geneticist at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and senior author on the study.

The researchers also found that the chances of a genetic condition being caught varied widely by race. Sixty-three percent of white patients knew about their condition, compared to only 22.7% of Black patients.

This was based on a sample of 365 patients ages 18 to 40 admitted to an ICU at Penn who had signed up for the Penn Medicine BioBank, a repository for health-related data used for research. Their blood samples were in the bank, allowing Drivas and his team to retrospectively sequence their genomes for disease-causing mutations.

When they sequenced the woman’s genome, they found she had a mutation in a gene called *Titin* that’s known to cause an especially high risk of heart failure in women during and after pregnancy.

“We probably would have managed her differently if we knew,” Drivas said.

Doctors could have periodically monitored her heart function after the second pregnancy. Instead, she went home after giving birth and only came back a few months later when her heart failure had progressed.

Similarly, another patient had multiple

aneurysms following surgery that could have possibly been prevented if she had been screened for her genetic condition.

Though the vast majority of patients in this study survived their ICU visit, many could have received more targeted care had their condition been found. Three-quarters of the disorders had standard medical management recommendations available.

It’s unknown if the outcomes of the patients studied could have been improved. The study did not identify individual patients, including the woman whose death after childbirth was cited as an example.

The issue is that genetic testing is rarely offered to adults, even when they are critically ill, Drivas said.

He sees this study as a call to action for ICU doctors to implement universal genetic testing — which is now widely available and often costs as little as a few hundred dollars — for all adults, so that no one goes undiagnosed.

“We need to switch to a model where the default is to send (patients for) genetic testing, not the exception,” he said.

Test adults, too

For decades, the medical field has operated under the assumption that the older you are, the less likely you are to have a genetic disorder, Drivas explained.

The reason for that is a lot of genetic diseases show up in early childhood. Doctors tend to look for those so-called “pediatric-onset” disorders, rather than ones that appear later in life.

“We just assume, if you’re 20 years or older, you can’t possibly have a genetic disease,” he said.

Plus, the threshold for getting tested is high. Conditions that cause intellectual impairment or affect multiple parts of the body are more obvious signs of a genetic condition.

Meanwhile, most of the diseases found in Drivas’ study only cause symptoms in adulthood, and may affect just one organ.

That bias is also reflected in the workforce, with most medical geneticists trained to work with children, not adults, Drivas added.

The genetic conditions most commonly found in this study were cystic fibrosis and Marfan syndrome, both of which tended to already be diagnosed.

The diseases that were commonly missed included cardiomyopathies, which affect the heart muscle and in-

crease the risk of heart failure.

Other commonly missed genetic conditions were those that increased the risk of aneurysms, which is an abnormal bulging of an artery caused by weakness in the artery wall, the study found.

A woman in her 30s had shown up to the ICU with multiple aneurysms around her brain and underwent a standard surgery to treat them. But the treatment ended up causing her to develop more aneurysms at the sites where doctors had been accessing her arteries.

This was characteristic of a condition

called vascular Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, which is caused by mutations in the *COL3A1* gene. However, the woman had never been offered genetic testing.

When Drivas sequenced her genome, he confirmed she indeed had the mutation. Had they known, they could have warned doctors not to perform that particular procedure.

“We would have said, ‘Hey, stop touching her arteries. They’re really fragile,’” he said.

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How to change fitness goals as you age

BY MORAYO OGUNBAYO

Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Throughout life's many stages, finding — and sticking to — a fitness routine can be complicated. Whether you struggle to find the right time or place, it seems like there's always something hindering you from getting that perfect schedule down.

As you age, this can become even more complicated. The workouts may not come as easy as they used to. Certain times of day that used to be optimal now lead to extreme discomfort. And one major drawback may be finding a new spot to workout after a move from your long-time community.

These problems, however, should never stop you from pursuing your fitness goals.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the benefits of a consistent workout routine may be even greater for people 65 or older. In the short term, it can improve older adults' sleep quality, anxiety levels and blood pressure. As the years go on, the CDC says consistent fitness can as-

sist in cancer prevention, maintaining a healthy weight and living independently longer.

While your body changes, your fitness routine should change along with it. Follow these tips to make sure you continue to have the safest and most productive workouts.

Monitor your condition closely

If the workouts you have always done seem harder now, that may be a sign that your body can no longer do the same things safely. To continue working your body in similar ways, monitor your condition as you workout.

One simple way to properly check on yourself during a workout is with a simple talk test, as described by Dr. Michael Kraft, assistant professor in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine at Emory University.

"Making sure that you're able to talk throughout the activity is super important," Kraft told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. "If you start to become breathless, you're starting to go up into the higher heart rate zones."

It is best to start any physical activity

slowly and gradually work your way up to your limit, rather than the other way around. According to the National Institute of Aging, this can reduce injury and help to "build confidence, motivation, and a regular routine."

Take your medical conditions into account

Throughout life, medical conditions or injuries have likely affected your workout routine in some way. As you get older, you may have to started taking those conditions into account even if you are presently feeling better.

One unexpected change many older adults face are the new ways their body reacts to heat, particularly because of medications that increase dehydration.

"Some of the diuretics that are out there, if you're elderly, can cause us to not be able to dissipate the heat well," Kraft explained.

He implores older adults to take into account if they have conditions or are on medications that predispose them for dehydration or overheating. The NIA recommends speaking with your doctor before starting a new workout and ask how any existing health issues may hinder your abilities.

Lean into the gadgets

Smart watches, heart rate monitors and other fancy workout gadgets can seem drastic, especially if you've watched fitness trends come and go.

However, these devices can keep you safe while you exercise.

Invest in a good heart monitoring watch that checks for blood pressure, blood glucose and heart rate. With these tools, you can know exactly how your body is reacting to each workout you throw at it.

At-home fitness bikes, treadmills and walking pads can also be beneficial in providing a safe place for you to consistently workout, no matter the weather conditions.

Don't settle on one activity

There may have been one fitness activity you stuck to throughout your life, consistently training in it until you were your very best. As you age, it's better to diversify your workouts.

The NIA suggests older adults engage in a "combination of aerobic, muscle-strengthening, and balance activities" each week.

It's time to reframe your definition of exercise. Everything from swimming to dancing to working in the yard can be classified as a fitness activity — and can develop into a new balanced routine.

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► Genetics

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Most of the patients included in this study had their first ICU visit within the past 10 years. The researchers hope to eventually return these testing results to the patients in the study, so that they can get more informed care going forward.

A need for universal testing

Drivas isn't sure why the racial disparity in diagnoses is so high. It tended to be reflected in conditions that were less obvious or perhaps were not causing symptoms yet.

The solution to these disparities may be to implement universal testing in ICUs.

A study from the University of

Washington had shown that Black children were much less likely to get genetic diagnoses than their white counterparts. However, when they made genetic testing the default in the neonatal ICU, "that disparity goes away completely, and everyone gets good care," he said.

Genetic testing is more feasible today than previous decades, thanks to the costs getting lower and the process getting faster.

For example, if someone presents with heart failure, doctors could order a targeted gene panel that should cost no more than \$250 and, for most patients, be covered by insurance, according to Drivas.

"Price has gone down, the reliability of testing has gone way up, and so it just makes it, in my opinion, kind of a no-brainer to get this done," he said.

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Dermatologists: Keep skin care routines simple

NEW YORK (AP) — There always seems to be someone on TikTok, YouTube or Instagram showing you a multistep skincare routine they swear by. They might use expensive products like snail mucin or red-light therapy masks that allegedly hydrate your skin or help reduce fine lines.

Is any of it necessary? Does any of it work?

“Social media is having such a huge influence on what we’re using in our skin and every individual is acting like their own clinician and trying to diagnose their own skin type and experiment with different regimens,” said Dr. Kathleen Suozzi, a professor of dermatology at Yale School of Medicine. “And really the main overarching thing is that skincare regimens have become way over-complicated.”

Some dermatologists say that many viral skincare products are unnecessary, even if they feel nice, and while some cause little to no harm, other treatments can cause more problems than they fix.

Face skin requires extra protection

The skin on our face is thinner than the skin on our bodies, and requires a gentler touch than other parts of the body.

Everyone’s skin is different, too: The soaps or cleansers that work for someone with oily skin may not satisfy someone with dry skin.

Dermatologists say a skincare routine should start with three things — a gentle cleanser, a moisturizer to hydrate the face and a sunscreen with at least SPF 30. Too many products can irritate sensitive skin and be redundant, since many products share the same ingredients.

In all cases, protecting your face from the sun is key, dermatologists said.

“The truth of the matter is, nine out of 10 skin care concerns on the face that people come to see me for are worsened by UV radiation from the sun,” said Dr. Oyetewa Asempa, the director of the Skin of Color clinic at Baylor College of Medicine.

Many skin issues, like wrinkles, dark pigmentation after a rash and dark scarring from acne, are made worse by the sun, she said.

What to know about retinol and exfoliation products

Wrinkles happen. And your skin over time can look less plump and glowing.

Retinol creams and chemical exfoliants are sold with the promise of keeping aging at bay. Some are recommended by dermatologists — but there are also some exceptions.

As we get older, our skin slows down its production of collagen, which keeps our skin bouncy and elastic. That leads to wrinkles. Retinoids and retinol creams can help, dermatologists said. But they recommend not using them until you are about 30 or older — any earlier could cause more problems, like skin irritation.

Dark spots and dead skin are also common skincare frustrations.

Exfoliation — removing dead skin — can help. But dermatologists recommend avoiding products that use beads, salts and sugars that exfoliate fragile facial skin by physically removing it. Instead, try chemical exfoliation with alpha-hydroxy acids or beta-hydroxy acids — but make sure you’re wearing sunscreen if you add either of these ingredients to your skincare regimen.

FDA-approved guidelines say chemical exfoliation is safe if certain ingredient levels are declared on retail products, but the requirements don’t apply to the more intense chemical peels applied by professionals, for example in salons.

What skin products to avoid

Influencers try to get you excited by trendy skincare ideas — and dermatologists want them to go away.

Dr. Asempa points to one currently popular example: beef tallow — also known as cow fat.

“I want you to leave the beef tallow with the cows,” she said.

Light therapy masks are also wildly popular — and also wildly over-hyped. Dermatologists say they can be useful in some situations, depending on the color you use and the strength of the masks.

Dr. Suozzi said that while research shows there may be some benefit to red-light therapy masks, which may help with collagen production, they are “not something that’s going to be transformative” for the skin.

And to have any hope, you’d need to use them a lot: “You need to be using these devices a few times a week for them to have any benefit, if at all.”

More expensive skin products don’t necessarily work better

Red-light therapy masks, snail mucin — slimy liquid that is touted as hydrating — and other products can be very expensive. But don’t let the price fool you, said Dr. Jordan Lim, a dermatology professor at Emory University School of Medicine.

“Price does not equal efficacy, and it does not equal better results,” Lim said. “A lot of the ingredients you’re seeing in a \$6 cream are also in a \$20 cream, also in that \$300 cream that you see a celebrity using.”



A woman washes her face as she prepares for work in Chicago.

AP file photo

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by
Sam Potter

IF YOU suffer from low back pain and sciatica, you are one of more than 50 million adults in the U.S. with this often crippling spinal condition.

Shooting, stabbing and burning pains from the low back, sometimes with additional pain through the buttocks and down the legs, are all symptoms of a pinched nerve often called "sciatica".

In severe cases it can lead to muscle wasting, numbness, and constant tingling down to the tips of the toes. Left untreated, the intense pain can rapidly wear you down and drain the joy out of life.

That is, until now...

Recent advances in the treatment of sciatica and lower back pain have led to the development and huge success of Non-Surgical Re-Constructive Spinal Care.

The excellent results of this treatment have been published in major medical journals. With some success rates as high as 90%, some back surgeons are recommending that their patients try this treatment first before having back surgery.

In Butler, you can try Non-Surgical Re-Constructive Spinal Care at Discover Wellness Center – the office of low back pain and sciatica relief expert Dr. Ram Parikh, D.C.

Dr. Ram and his team of fully-trained spinal care specialists have helped more than 3,000 patients find relief from their agonizing back pain and sciatica.

According to Dr. Ram, "We use a combination of ultra-advanced technology not found elsewhere in Butler for precisely

diagnosing the cause of low back pain and sciatica, and a unique program for reconstructing the damaged area causing the pain. This means superior long-term results for most people."

Because the treatment is non-surgical, safe, and easy, most patients report an almost immediate relief from their pain.

Patient Jeff P., of Butler, says, "My back pain was unbearable, but the worst thing was the searing, burning pain I felt in my buttock and leg.

I couldn't work or do anything useful, and the drugs my M.D. prescribed hardly did anything.

My wife insisted I respond to one of these ads. I thought it would be a total waste of time, but I'm so glad she kept after me.

Thankfully, I called your number. I was 95% better in just a couple weeks."

Your invitation for a comprehensive consultation and examination to pinpoint the cause of your low back pain and sciatica...

All you have to do to receive a thorough diagnostic examination with the most advanced technology in the world and a comprehensive easy-to-understand report on your state of health is to call 724-256-4361.

Mention this article and Dr. Ram will happily reduce his

usual fee for an in-depth consultation and examination, including x-rays, to just \$45. (The value is \$257.)

Act quickly. For obvious reasons, this is a time-limited offer, with only 10 reader consultations available at this exclusively-discounted rate.

My advice: Don't suffer a moment longer.

Find out if Non-Surgical Re-Constructive Spinal Care can help you by booking a consultation with Dr. Ram and his team now by calling 724-256-4361. They are waiting to take your call today.

They actually treat the cause of your health problems, not just your symptoms.

That's why thousands of grateful patients tell Dr. Ram and his team, "You gave me back my life!"

Over the years they've treated thousands of patients with back problems and sciatica. The vast majority of them have enjoyed superior, lasting relief. In fact, many who suffered and unsuccessfully tried other remedies before calling Discover Wellness Center report that Dr. Ram and his team gave them back their lives!

Call them now and get a full and thorough examination to pinpoint the cause of your problem for just \$45. The normal cost of such an exam is \$257, so you'll save \$212!

Don't suffer from the pain and



Sciatica Relief Expert

Dr. Ram Parikh, D.C., says:

In 23 years of practice, I've never seen a treatment as effective as Non-Surgical Re-Constructive Spinal Care for patients with sciatica or lower back pain.

immobility any longer. Discover the natural treatment that can eliminate the cause of your problem and give you the safe, lasting relief you deserve.

Call Discover Wellness Center now at 724-256-4361 and cut out or tear off this valuable article and take it to your appointment. You'll be entitled to a comprehensive evaluation to diagnose the cause of your problem – and you'll be on your way to safe, lasting relief! Don't delay your important diagnosis and treatment another moment! Call and take advantage of this special opportunity.

- PAID ADVERTISEMENT -

Special Readers' Offer

Breakthrough relief for stenosis and sciatica