

INSIDE THE CORTISOL FACE CRAZE: PROVIDING CRUCIAL LESSONS FOR THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY

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As unnerving as it may seem, stress has become an almost inescapable part of modern life. The world is moving at a faster pace with each day, and chronic stresses' impact on human health is growing to be increasingly documented. In the beauty industry, the effect of stress on appearances—particularly its implication on skin health—is gaining increased attention as consumers and brands alike look to educate themselves on such issues.

The latest stress-related matter to capture intrigue? Cortisol face. However, the booming trend may not be all that it seems—at least in the context consumers currently understand it.

The Science Behind Cortisol's Beauty Impact

"If we have endocrinologic disease states where there are dramatically increased amounts of cortisol levels (either in our body or from outside sources like medicine), we can get a condition called 'cortisol face' or 'moon face' where our face becomes round," cosmetic dermatologist **Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank** tells BeautyMatter.

Impressionable Interest: Clarifying the Facts

As consumers catch wind of the cortisol face trend, education is key. **Dr. Frank** explains that several individuals are misdiagnosing themselves with cortisol face, noting normal levels of cortisol (which are essential to the body) as something to try and completely eradicate. This is due to unclear information about the hormone, commonly spread at pace on social media by those without true medical knowledge, which can lead to potentially overlooking other underlying health issues.

"Consumers are misunderstanding that inherent cortisol levels are the only cause of facial changes, and that is not true. It is a small piece of a large puzzle," says **Dr. Frank**.

"When we don't sleep, don't eat right, or drink alcohol, what do we have? We have puffy faces," **Dr. Frank** affirms. "There are several things other than cortisol that can make us feel swollen and puffy: alcohol, a high sodium diet, not sleeping, or general stress as a whole. It's not one particular thing, and certainly, cortisol isn't the only thing to blame when our faces feel round and puffy. Let's just face it—we just feel puffy sometimes," he adds.

The Debate: Can Products Truly Combat Cortisol Face?

While “cortisol face” has become a buzzword on social media and resultantly in marketing, it is important not to exploit misunderstood medical terms as a simple label for selling products. Dr. Frank agrees that the majority of consumers are misdiagnosing themselves, and could simply improve the impact of a "puffy, round face" through lifestyle changes.

"There are minimal studies that show taking supplements can significantly lower cortisol face by any means," adds Dr. Frank. However, for those legitimately suffering with cortisol face through issues like Cushing Syndrome (caused by prolonged exposure to high levels of cortisol) the power is in the hands of the individual. "You can get rid of cortisol face, and it's always a lifestyle change," he says.

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BY DR. PAUL JARROD FRANK, COSMETIC DERMATOLOGIST

Beyond a Round Face: Cortisol’s Impact on Skin Health

"There's no doubt that when we're under stress, there are increased cortisol levels in our blood, but not always enough to cause 'cortisol face.' However, this stress elevation can affect other things, such as inflammatory diseases like arthritis or acne," says Dr. Frank.