

Spa Nutrition

by pat lam

The entry of spas in the wellness arena has sparked a deeper interest in health services. Many spas list their menus as health and wellness, offering a plethora of services such as "The Healthy Program" and "A Day of Beauty." The media abounds with articles on various topics of health and wellness, and in almost every consumer health and beauty magazine, there is an article on healthy eating and exercise. We have come a long way in educating the public about health and most people are more aware, particularly the aging population who actively are seeking strategies and information on maximizing their good health and longevity. The trend of healthy living is here to stay.

In recent years, the term "spa" has come to mean a cheerful, relaxing place that is devoted to health. Many spa menus list services as "anti-aging," encompassing hydrotherapy, aromatherapy, facial and body treatments, body wraps, hair removal, scalp treatments, nutrition counseling, weight management and body toning treatments, and all infer that they can help people look and feel better. It now is firmly established that healthy nutrition forms the basis of all skin and body treatments, and proper care of the skin and body is not complete without treating the body from the inside out. In the public eye, the term *wellness* may entice clients to make appointments to become "well" as the word implies, and they may harbor an expectancy that they will feel well after spa treatments.

Therefore, it is important that estheticians become more knowledgeable in this area of health—destination spas in particular, which offer wellness programs that include not only nutrition guidance but also mind and body fitness. These spas employ professionals in areas such as nutrition and fitness. But what about the estheticians working in the day spas, health spas and medical

spas? They have become more interested in learning about nutrition and how they can dispense advice to their health-savvy clients. The small day spas cannot afford to hire these professionals and in most cases, nutritionists are not necessary unless the client has a health problem. These "normal" clients simply need motivation and guidance to make healthier choices in lifestyle behaviors to optimize utmost care of their skin and body.

Dispensing free nutrition advice helps to strengthen the client's confidence in the spas—all fine and good. But as a business venture, how can this service be used to increase revenue in the spas? Once the client understands that improper dietary habits and other lifestyle behaviors may be the cause of their skin and body conditions, they will be more likely to purchase dietary supplements and products recommended to them. People need to be told that what they eat will affect their appearance, and education in healthy eating is therefore the first step to success in helping clients attain wellness.

It's important to learn more about a few of the most common skin and body conditions and their attributing causes, as well as some helpful information on dietary strategies for improvement.





A HEALTHY BODY
*weight is the first step
to attaining the state
of wellness and health,
and is truly anti-aging
therapy.*

Can the spa therapist help clients achieve or maintain a healthy body weight? The obesity epidemic that is prevalent throughout the world needs to be addressed and the spa professional is ideally situated in society to help bring about positive lifestyle changes. How can we offer wellness if people are overweight or obese? A healthy body weight is the first step to attaining the state of wellness and health, and is truly anti-aging therapy. The short-term sense of wellness experienced in the spa is good but we can transfer this to longer term benefits if we help promote healthy living. We need to be more educated in health topics, particularly nutrition and exercise, because they form the platform for health.

NUTRITIONAL SKIN CARE

Using nutritional regimens augmented by dietary supplements can enhance the results of skin and body treatments, and minimize skin inflammation and disorders. A high percentage of clients already are using dietary supplements on a daily basis. Studies show that they purchase dietary supplements such as vitamins, minerals, enzymes, herbs and pre-digested proteins to maximize their health from informa-

tion obtained from the Internet, friends or the pharmacist. In order to give nutritional guidance, a prescription form with questions that will give a brief listing of some pertinent health history, medication for chronic diseases, drugs (including birth control pills), and even ethnicity and other lifestyle behaviors should be included. Questions on regular daily food intake including drinks, food preparation as well as other negative lifestyle behaviors, such as smoking, need to be asked. Many people do not make healthy choices in eating due to insufficient knowledge, and several nutritional deficiencies simply can be the cause of a poor skin complexion.

Skin care professionals do not have to be nutritionists to guide clients to healthier eating. When confronted with these skin conditions, educate the client with information on the causes of the skin condition and how treatments would help. (See **Skin Condition Causes**.) Include information on proper dietary and lifestyle behaviors that will improve the skin's complexion as well. In this way, the credibility of the skin care professional will be enhanced and the "wellness" image of the spa professional will be adopted more firmly in the public mind.

(continues on page 49)

SKIN CONDITION CAUSES

SKIN CONDITIONS	ATTRIBUTED CAUSES
Dry, sensitive, blotchy, hot to the touch, usually thin but can be thick also.	MAIN CAUSE: lack of sebum • Thin skin stimulates easily. • Sun damaged. • Lack of protective creams. • Improper choice of skin care products. • Allergies. • Hereditary. • Stress.

NUTRITIONAL ADVICE

- Increase consumption of phytochemicals—brightly colored fruits and vegetables—to improve immune system; anti-cancer, anti-viral properties.
- Increase antioxidant foods—cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, brussel sprouts and cauliflower.
- Drink a glass of water before and after meals—a minimum of eight 8-oz. glasses per day.
- Use tepid water to wash face and body.
- Avoid or reduce stimulating drinks such as coffee and alcohol.
- Try green mint tea, hot or cold, instead.
- Consume antioxidant food and drinks—all wine-colored fruits and drinks such as cranberry, black currant, and all berries.
- Minimize inflammatory foods such as meat and dairy products; try anti-inflammatory foods such as fish—salmon, sardines, mackerel—or alternative meat replacements, such as soy, legumes, flaxseed and evening primrose oils.

SKIN CONDITIONS	ATTRIBUTED CAUSES
Oily seborrheic, clogged, pustular, scars, sallow complexion, usually medium to thick skin.	MAIN CAUSE: overproduction of sebum due to: • Hormonal imbalance—puberty, PMS, pregnancy. • Hereditary. • Improper cleansing. • Stress. • Drugs. • Environment (high humidity).

NUTRITIONAL ADVICE

- Consume anti-inflammatory foods and drinks during breakouts or during PMS, such as Omega 3—salmon, sardines and mackerel, to reduce inflammation.
- Try soy milk instead of dairy products.
- Detoxify by eating high-fiber foods such as cereals, vegetables and fruits, more than 3 grams per serving.
- Eat more steamed/grilled foods and reduce or avoid fried foods.
- Eat a more vegetarian diet by trying legumes—beans and peas; they are alternative forms of meat and full of fiber.
- Increase consumption of antioxidant foods to reduce free radicals.
- Drink green or black teas, hot or cold.
- Drink water before and after meals to enhance absorption, digestion and elimination.



(continued from page 47)

BODY THERAPIES

Services offered in the spa for the body include treatments for slimming, toning and cellulite. However, although these treatments make the client feel good and relaxed, they are more psychological and don't change the body physiologically. In order to produce real results, both nutrition and exercise must be taken into consideration. Because of the social pressure to be slim, everyone wants to lose weight, and weight management and control services are the first choice of treatment in the spa. The spa therapist is ideally positioned in society to help guide clients to a healthier choice of foods and basic nutritional guidance can be given to the client to support the treatment. However, the client needs strong motivation and support to adhere to healthy dietary intake. Educating the client about the nutrient values of the foods, teaching how to read food labels and how food preparation affects nutrients are the most important steps in the wellness program.

For weight management, dietary advice and exercise regimens can be recommended to support the body therapies offered to help bring about positive lifestyle changes. (See **Dietary and Exercise Advice.**)

SPA CUISINE

What can you serve with your spa programs? Destination spas offer more haute cuisine prepared by professional chefs. Smaller day spas do not have those amenities but can offer small healthy snacks that are quite appealing. Many promote packages where

BE SURE TO EXPLAIN the health benefits of any nutritional products that are retailed.

the client stays for several hours, half a day or a whole day. During this time, some kind of light meal or snack should be included. If you are going to incorporate advice on nutrition and exercise, it makes simple good sense to serve healthy snacks with spa packages. A heavy meal can create a lethargic effect so it is a good idea to serve a light meal that easily can be digested, particularly if the client is going to have any hydrotherapy treatments or lie on a bed for a number of hours. The idea is to increase the basal metabolic rate (BMR), not reduce it. Most day spas will have a small kitchen with a refrigerator, microwave and possibly even a stove. If you are going to serve a light meal with the various programs, it is best to stick to simple food items that will not spoil if they are not used within a day or two. Most spas have distilled water machines for their steamers; this is a healthier choice than mineral water.

Use small serving plates on a tray that can hold a drink and a small meal. All food should be small servings, bite-sized so that utensils are not necessary. Decorate and make the plate colorful and attractive by adding a sprig of parsley or a flower on the side. Now is a good time to introduce some healthy foods that can serve as alternatives to the unhealthy choices that the client is used to eating or drinking. For example, offer low-fat soy milk instead of regular milk, low-fat cheese, such as mozzarella, lappi or swiss, and fruits with red or wine colors that have antioxidant properties such as grapes or plums. Always serve fruit juice and not a fruit drink since these contain an excessive amount of sugar. Any fruits or vegetables should be brightly colored—these contain antioxidants and phytochemicals, and served in thin slices. Avoid using any dressing if possible except perhaps for a low-fat yogurt mixed with a citrus dressing.

Green tea is a simple, inexpensive and healthy drink to introduce to clients for its antioxidant properties and can be served either hot or cold. If serving meat, cold chicken or even thinly sliced lean ham probably are best because most people eat these. Avoid serving any sauces with strong smells such as garlic or onions. In fact, it is best not to serve any dressings since the hidden fats often are found here. Remember to educate the client on these healthier choices and their benefits.

DIETARY AND EXERCISE ADVICE

BODY CHARACTERISTICS	Overweight, not obese, BMI of 25 to 25.9, round padded contours, round back, heavy thighs, leads a sedentary lifestyle. • These individuals have a low basal metabolic rate and the body does not burn energy easily, even if they eat little food.
SPA THERAPIES	• Slimming treatments that incorporate hydrotherapy, underwater massage, gyratory massage, vacuum suction, electrical therapy equipment such as faradic-type current or electrical muscular equipment.
NUTRITIONAL ADVICE	• Goal is to lose weight gradually, not drastically. • Concentrate on low-fat, low-calorie foods, more healthy fats, such as omega-3 and omega-6 found in fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel and sardines. • Eat fish instead of meat. • Eat several small meals throughout the day instead of three large meals. • Choose more brightly colored fruits and vegetables that contain phytochemicals and antioxidants. • Minimize fried foods, fast foods or convenience foods that contain high-salt content. • High water intake—eight 8 oz. glasses of water daily with meals. • Minimize high-sugar and starchy foods, and eat more high fiber foods such as fruits and vegetables. • Take dietary supplements such as enzymes, fiber and antioxidants such as vitamins A, C and E, selenium, CoQ10, chromium and baby aspirin daily.
RECOMMENDED EXERCISES	• Goal is to increase the basal metabolic rate through exercise. • Start slowly and increase aerobic activity to at least 5-6 times/week for about 30-45 minutes—try brisk walking, treadmill or cycle. • Start slowly with weight training to increase muscle mass and reduce fat mass, such as squats or lunges, adductor and abductor exercises, lateral pull-downs and abdominal curls.

Here are some suggestions for healthy snacks in small day spas to offer your clients.

For a program over 3 hours, try offering:

- A glass of low-fat or soy milk, a slice of low fat cheese, two pieces of melba toast or unsalted multigrain crackers, and a few grapes.
- A glass of cranberry, or any berry juice, a slice of cheese, unsalted vegetable crackers and a few small cherry tomatoes or radishes.
- Two whole wheat crackers with hummus dressing that contains olive oil, and a few thin slices of red/yellow/green sweet peppers.
- If you have a Japanese restaurant nearby, offer simple California rolls to sushi lovers with a cup of hot or cold green tea.

For the executive having a treatment program of longer duration, say 5-6 hours, a light lunch can comprise of:

- Thinly sliced cold chicken, broccoli or braised cauliflower flowerets, a few almonds or walnuts, and a glass of grape juice.

For the vegan:

- A fruit salad of chopped apples, melons and orange slices with walnuts or pecans served with a citrus dressing over mixed greens.

For the sports enthusiast:

- Two slices whole wheat bread with a small pot of honey and wheat germ, and a smoothie made from soy milk blended with an egg or a few tablespoons of whey protein.
- A smoothie comprised of flaxseed, low fat yogurt, bananas, juices or soymilk and ice cubes.
- Alternatively, a sliced hard boiled egg served with unsalted crackers or melba toast, sliced fruits such as apples and pears, and a glass of soy milk.

FINANCIAL REWARDS

How can the spa benefit financially from offering nutritious programs? Devote one section of the spa to retail skin and body products with attractive displays of shower gels, loofah mitts, aromatherapy oils and other products the spa carries. Another



*THE TREND of
healthy living is
here to stay.*

section can have a display of dietary supplements that support the skin and body treatments offered such as vitamins and minerals, enzymes and herbal products. CoQ10 and chromium piccolonate are some examples of supplements that help to increase body metabolism, and this will support weight management programs.

With every treatment performed, why not include a package of the recommended dietary supplements so the client will begin healthy choices immediately and hopefully continue to use them daily? Several natural herbal teas with upbeat flavors and packaging such as green tea infused with lavender or mint are attractively packaged for retail in spas. Once at home, clients can simply mix a package with a bottle of water and ice cubes, and presto, you have herbal iced tea ready to go! Clients love the attractive pack-

aging and the idea of drinking health drinks instead of caffeine. Offer iced tea on hot days and hot tea on cold days, and clients will want to bring this soothing feeling home. Be sure to explain the health benefits of any nutritional products that are retailed, and offer educational literature as well as any videos on all products for clients to review. The more knowledge they acquire, the more they will buy. These materials should inform clients of the importance of nutrition to their skin and body conditions.

Wellness should be by choice and not by force. As spa professionals practice wellness themselves, they will serve as role models to motivate the clients and others around them. The emphasis on healthy living in the spa will not only enhance your services and image but also result in higher profits and ultimately, a better reputation for the spa as a true wellness center. ■