

# SPA cures

Need a massage? We've got **48** ways to rub out stress and heal yourself

## HAIR LOSS

"You also have what Dr. Kingsley calls a 'tug test,' wherein he determines how many strands come out of your head after a gentle yank."

something not quite right metabolically, so oftentimes hormone, iron and thyroid levels can be adjusted to the optimum level for your hair follicles. I was put on a series of about ten vitamins a day, including protein supplements, vitamin B and gelatin. Changing one's diet to raise protein and iron intake (e.g., eggs for breakfast, chicken or tuna for lunch) is a key part of the process. Additionally, any significant trauma in hormones (childbirth, change of birth-control pill), emotional stress (grieving, a physical accident) or antidepressant medications can alter hair structure.

The basic theory is that if you lay the right groundwork and attack the problem at the source, the hair should follow. Treating your hair like a vital organ will ensure you avoid a "bad hair day," a phrase Kingsley claims he coined almost 30 years ago—and one that I hope I don't have to use for a long time.—*Kristina Dechter*

## Adult acne

Eating has always dominated my life. As a food writer, I'm prone to rhapsodic soliloquies about a piece of buttery prosciutto or a chocolate truffle. I don't concern myself with calories. And most of my

meals linger in the "fratboy" end of the spectrum: chicken enchiladas, Cubanos, ice cream. I dodge fresh vegetables—if it's basted in olive oil, I'm there.

It's never occurred to me that my mottled skin—with its oily sheen, breakouts and backne—has anything to do with my diet. Hasn't the food-acne connection been proved a myth? Interestingly, the dermatologists and nutritionists I spoke to admitted that they don't know everything there is to know about acne—though most agreed that it is primarily caused by hereditary hormonal shifts that bring bacteria to the surface of the skin, clogging pores and causing infection. In my freshman year of college I had such bad cystic acne, I wore long sheets of hair over my face like a teenage Crystal Gayle.

But mild breakouts are a mainstay, and at age 31, I'm not immune to vanity. So I went to **Susan Ciminelli** (754 Fifth Ave at 57th St, ninth floor; 212-872-2650), a homeopathic-focused "facialist to the stars" (including Ashanti and Beyoncé). Ciminelli's penthouse office at Bergdorf's is furnished with small Buddha statues, ambient lighting and incense, and Ciminelli herself is a dewy-skinned 51-year-old who looks 40. She started gently, asking me about my diet. When I told her, her owlish eyes widened in alarm: "You're shot up with antibiotics: Meat and cheese are the two things you should never touch." I

asked her what she thought of my skin, and she shifted into high-pitch: "I see bumps all over your face." Gulp. When I left, it was with strict instructions to follow the seven-day cleanse in her book, *The Ciminelli Solution*. She also loaded me down with a slew of fancy natural products—a far cry from my bar soap, Aveeno scrubby pads and Olay.

When I cracked the book, I gasped in horror: salad for lunch *and* dinner? Cereal sprinkled with flaxseed for breakfast? No sugar, red meat, white meat—other than organic chicken—starch, alcohol or cheese? That, plus loads of multivitamins and liquid acidophilus for cleansing the system ("It will make you poop buckets," Ciminelli cheerily tells me). The following week is a heady mix of withdrawal, anger and gas. Nice.

My yen for sugar and starch spiked, then dropped. I found myself appreciating pears, oranges and apples. My appetite and belly shrank: I lost seven pounds in ten days. Since my main source of pleasure was ripped away, I felt pretty miserable. It helped that Ciminelli—whose spa also offers massage and seaweed wraps—plied me with lymphatic drainage massages to help "detox" my system. These felt great; my circulation seemed boosted and I looked rosy afterward.

Seven days turned into a month's worth of changed eating, though I didn't adhere to it strictly. I avoided the big bads (except for a few notable crashes from the wagon; I am a food critic, after all), but I couldn't give up coffee, and though I didn't follow her recipes to the letter, I did eat veggies every day.

And my skin? Though it wasn't completely clear, the pores around my nose shrank and my friends commented on my face's "glow." The pricey products and two facials I received probably played a role: A veritable blitzkrieg of blackhead popping, masks and steaming resulted in doll-like, pearly skin—a first for me. But my back acne, which wasn't treated with any special products, never disappeared, it just waned.

The good news: There is kale and broccoli in my fridge. The bad: I'm still breaking out periodically, though I'm maintaining a bit of that glow. The ugly: I'm never going to let anyone tell me how to eat again. Sorry, Susan Ciminelli, but I'm taking a cue from Charles Dickens on this one: "Subdue your appetites, my dears, and you've conquered human nature."—*Alex Van Buren*

## OR TRY

### ► Ling Skincare

One facial isn't going to cure acne, but a series of treatments might make a dent in it. Most dermatologists offer in-office peels, which are always a good option (they cost about \$200 and aren't covered by insurance). Otherwise, consider a Detoxifying Anti-Acne Facial here (90 minutes for \$240). 191 Prince St at Sullivan St (212-982-8833); 12 E 16th St between Fifth Ave and Union Sq West (212-989-8833); 105 W 77th St at Columbus Ave (212-877-2883)

### ► Christine Chin

...or a series of facials (\$120), with microdermabrasion (90 minutes for \$180). 82 Orchard St at Broome St (212-353-0503)