

# SELF

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TRENDING

By Korin Miller

## Here's How Stress Can Seriously Mess With Your Skin

"General Hospital" star Kirsten Storms is taking a break from the show due to stress-related skin issues. And doctors say this kind of skin reaction is more common than you'd think.



You've heard that being stressed out isn't great for your skin, but *General Hospital* star Kirsten Storms is experiencing it firsthand. Storms announced on Twitter on Sunday that she's taking a break from the show due to "skin issues." "My dr's say my breakouts are due to stress, but shouldn't take too long to get under control," she added.

While Storms' case sounds extreme, doctors say it's not as rare as you'd think.

“I see this all the time,” New York City dermatologist Doris Day, M.D., author of *100 Questions and Answers About Acne* and the upcoming book *Skinfluence*, tells SELF.

Tweeters! First, thank you for the outpouring of love & support. I appreciate the positive messages I've received ❤️

Second, yes I am taking a little break from work due to some skin issues I've been having. My dr's say my breakouts are due to stress, but shouldn't take too long to get under control. (I can say that I'm on the better end of it now) However, it was becoming too difficult for GH to coverup. And we all know in this biz appearance is important. In the meantime I look forward to seeing Molly on screen as I take the next few weeks to heal. Again - thanks for the love and you will see me again in no time!



**Kirsten Storms** ✓

@teenystweeting

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Gary Goldenberg, M.D., medical director of the Dermatology Faculty Practice at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, agrees, telling SELF that stress-related skin issues are “very common.” “Stress can worsen medical skin conditions, such as acne, rosacea, psoriasis, and eczema,” he says. “It also contributes to wrinkle formation and dull skin.”

He explains why: Increased stress levels produce higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol and increase the release of reactive oxygen species (molecules that contain oxygen) in your body. This then causes your skin to break down and become dry, which can exacerbate underlying skin conditions you may already have. It can also contribute to the breakdown of collagen and elastic fibers in your skin, increasing the odds you’ll develop wrinkles.

Day says she often sees it manifest itself in telling places. New moms, for example, may develop stress-related rashes on their hands from over-washing. “You can make a physical correlation but there’s also a mental one that they’re so worried about carrying germs,” she says.

Day has also seen adult patients develop stress-related breakouts on their cheeks—which is more typical in teenagers—as a result of life stressors. “It’s very personal, depending on the stress that you’re having and how you’re managing it,” she says.

While doctors can treat the symptoms the same way they would for non stress-related problems, they say zeroing in on the source of the skin issue is important, too. “I also discuss with patients ways of managing stress and often recommend a visit to their primary care doctor for a follow-up to make sure there isn’t a medical reason for increased stress levels,” Goldenberg says.

Day stresses the importance of getting to the root of the problem and doing something about it, if you can. “It’s your body telling you something,” she says. “To just treat the symptoms without addressing the problem is only masking it. Otherwise, it’s more likely to come back.”