

The

## BRUSH-OFF

We brush our hair and teeth every day, but how many of us brush our skin, asks Julie Ritter.

You'd be surprised at the amount of rubbish your skin gets rid of. As the body's largest organ and one of the five main eliminative routes (along with the lungs, the kidneys, the bowels and the lymphatic system), it is responsible for controlling body temperature, providing a warning system, protecting internal organs — and getting rid of waste matter.

Almost one-third of the body's waste is eliminated through the skin. Unbelievable? Perhaps, but a simple test used in conjunction with skin-brushing can show you how much waste your skin sloughs off. Rub a damp flannel over your freshly-brushed body, hang it up to dry and repeat the next day. After a few days the smell of the flannel will be revolting because of the waste it has picked up.

Brushing your skin may sound a bit odd, but it is a technique gaining in popularity as people see its benefits.

As we become more diet and exercise-conscious, we are aware of how important it is to keep the skin healthy and our circulation stimulated. A dull, lifeless, sometimes puffy skin is caused by poor circulation and a sluggish lymphatic system — and this is where brushing comes in.

One of the best techniques for stimulating the circulation, encouraging lymphatic drainage and spring cleaning your body is to brush it. This stimulates the movement of interstitial fluids and breaks down congestion in areas where the lymph-flow has become sluggish and toxins have collected. An extraordinarily gentle yet powerful technique, it can with skill be used to relieve puffiness, to smooth the look of your skin, and to stimulate skin vitality.

Skin-brushing has been used by doctors working with natural methods of healing for many years. One of the primary causes of fatigue, disease and cell degeneration (leading to premature ageing) is poor circulation of lymph to and from the cells and tissues in the body.

The lymphatic system plays a vital role in determining how well we look and feel. Like the skin, it is one of the main five elimination routes in our bodies and is packed with white cells which pick up metabolic waste and other toxins from the cells and transports them to other areas of the body for disposal.

The lymphatic system, unlike blood which is pumped around the body by the heart, relies upon compression by muscles in the arms and legs and partly on the suction created with every breath. When lymphatic drainage is sluggish the fluid lingers in certain areas making the skin look puffy.

The build-up of toxins in the



Almost one-third of the body's waste is eliminated through the skin. Regular brushing of skin when it's dry stimulates the circulation which in turn helps the elimination process — it leaves skin glowing with health, too. The above selection of body brushing tools are all available at The Body Shop though other makes of brushes can be bought in all good pharmacies.

tissues also sets up conditions that induce the formation of cellulite.

When the circulation is stimulated by skin-brushing, the skin achieves a better texture and a more radiant appearance, because the

newly-forming cells receive a good supply of necessary nutrients. It also promotes the elimination of toxic waste through the surface of the skin and stimulates drainage all over — thus cellulite can then be reduced

and, more importantly, prevented.

Leslie Kenton, beauty editor of *Harpers and Queen* and author of *Ageless Ageing* and the *10 Day Clean-Up Plan*, is an advocate of brushing. "Skin that is brushed regularly yields up the most amazing quantity of rubbish which can otherwise remain in your body to interfere with cellular metabolism and produce unsightly lumps and bumps," she says.

To gain maximum benefits, skin should be brushed for five minutes each day, and be as important as brushing your hair or teeth.

Before your bath you should brush your skin all over with a dry brush. You begin at the tips of your shoulders and cover your whole body with long smooth strokes over the shoulders, arms and trunk in a downwards motion, then upward towards the heart, over the feet, legs and hips.

You will notice your skin take on a nice rosy red colour. This is due to the blood rushing through the capillaries just below the surface of the skin, and proves your system is starting to wake up.

You need to go over your skin once for it to work and your skin will feel invigorated. At first go easy on your skin, as how firm you prefer depends entirely on how toned your skin and body are now and avoid the sensitive area of the breasts.

The flannel test is Ms Kenton's idea. The smell of the flannel indicates the quantity of waste products that have come directly through your skin's surface.

It is up to you to choose the type of brush you will use. Several types are available in the UAE, both synthetic and natural fibre or mixed fibre brushes.

The Body Shop has long handled short-handled brushes with synthetic fibres which come in a variety of bright colours and priced at Dh30 and Dh25 respectively.

The Beach Pharmacy, on Al Wasl Road, has a large selection of the French Altesse brushes. They have a mixed-fibre brush with a long wooden handle which is detachable to make a small brush with a hair strap. This is probably the best type as the long handle can be used for reaching places like the lower back and the short brush with hand strap for achieving a constant all-over pressure. This brush costs Dh32. They also sell a variety of short-handled pure and mixed-fibre brushes in the Altesse range, priced from Dh19 to Dh32.

Most of the pharmacies throughout the UAE sell a long-handled brush with synthetic fibres for Dh15.

Skin brushing is for everyone, and combined with a healthy diet and sensible exercise it will set you on the road to vitality and good looks and who doesn't want that?