



BY HILARY BODDIE

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

The latest A-list health craze is oxygen bars...

When you've had a long day, fresh air can be just what you need to lift your spirits. Could this be why stars such as Madonna, Mick Jagger, Kate Moss and Gwyneth Paltrow believe in boosting their wellbeing with a blast of pure oxygen? In America, oxygen bars are the place to be seen, where the cool and trendy go to receive a little oxygen therapy. Woody Harrelson was so impressed that he opened his own oxygen bar in LA! Over here too, more and more people are realising the benefits of pure air with oxygen machines being installed at gyms, airports and even department stores.

WHY OXYGEN?

Oxygen is vital to the body – not only to breathe but to create energy, digest, detoxify and fight off infection. Everybody breathes in oxygen automatically, but as pollution levels rise, the oxygen level found naturally in the atmosphere is being reduced by 0.8 per cent every 15 years.

Currently, every breath we take supplies us with only an estimated 21 per cent of oxygen, which is way below what we need to achieve optimum health. And the situation is even worse in urban cities such as London and New York, where the oxygen content of the air may be as low as 13-14 per cent.

A consequence of this depletion of oxygen levels has been an increase in demand for oxygen therapy, where people top up their oxygen levels to boost their health.

GOING DOWN

Lifestyle factors that deplete oxygen levels:

- Airline travel and jet-lag
- Stress
- Smoking
- Sun exposure
- Excess alcohol
- Medication and antibiotics
- The environment.

KEEP IT PURE!

According to recent studies, inhaling pure oxygen helps boost overall wellbeing both internally and externally. It can help increase energy levels, enable a speedier recovery after any kind of exertion, help ease headaches and hangovers, relieve stress, increase concentration and enable you to feel more relaxed.

Oxygen also helps the blood flow around the body. It boosts the physical condition by improving the circulation. This enhances the general performance of the body from the healing process right through to keeping the skin looking good and helping to prevent the signs of ageing. A short blast of oxygen may also be the best way to heal wounds. The results of a recent trial show that brief exposure to oxygen not only can help wounds heal but also speeds up the healing process.



Uma Thurman (above) and Gwyneth Paltrow (left) are just two of the A-list actresses who incorporate oxygen into their health regime. If the skin lacks oxygen it can appear dull and lifeless

Oxygen therapy is well established as a treatment to improve the healing of wounds, burns, skin grafts, soft tissue damage and radiation damage.

Some doctors are treating cosmetic surgery and laser patients with oxygen therapy to reduce inflammation and speed up healing.

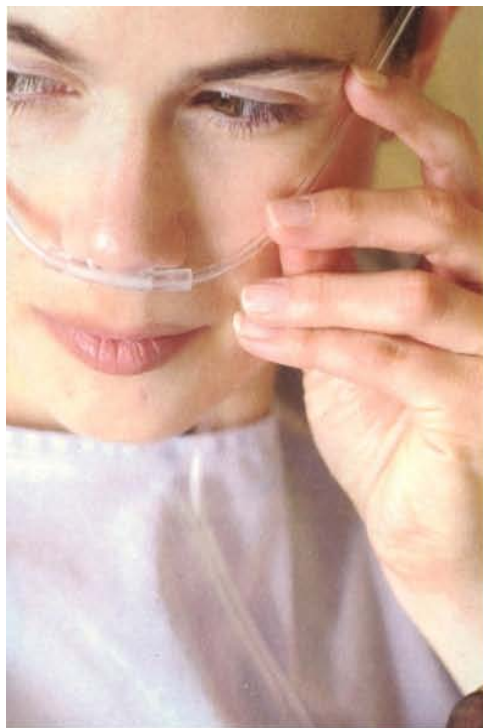
Hyperbaric oxygen therapy, where patients breathe 100 per cent oxygen while in an enclosed pressurised chamber, has been found to help treat a range of conditions from infected wounds and burns to fractures and cystitis. The therapy is thought to stimulate the growth of new blood vessels helping to boost healing.

AIR HEADS

A study carried out at the Human Cognitive Neuroscience Unit at the University Of Northumbria reported that extra oxygen can also help improve mental performance. According to researchers, brain power can be increased by up to 20 per cent when people breathe in extra oxygen. Experts believe the more oxygen in the body and brain, the better your system will function.

WHY OXYGEN?

- It helps you stay alert.
- Take it after a flight to help alleviate jet-lag.
- When you have a hangover, it can help to clear the mind after overdoing the alcohol.
- During a physical workout, a boost of oxygen can help feed the metabolism and increase blood flow to the muscles.
- Boost your diet – by helping the body's cells to eliminate toxins more effectively, it allows them to absorb nutrients more efficiently.
- Helps to eliminate free radicals, one of the primary causes of ageing and some diseases.



Above: People are realising the benefits of getting extra oxygen, with oxygen bars becoming more and more commonplace

GOOD TO GLOW

The cells in the skin need oxygen to help them function properly and eliminate toxins, absorb nutrients and reproduce themselves in an optimum way. Studies have shown that as we age, the oxygen levels in our skin become depleted, making it more difficult for the cells to expel toxins and renew themselves. Even by the age of 25 the skin's oxygen is lower than that of a healthy teenager. This is because the blood vessels that deliver the oxygen become more narrow and their walls become less permeable.

This decrease in oxygen can result in premature ageing, impaired cell renewal and hyper-pigmentation. Without adequate oxygen the skin does not breathe properly and it will soon begin to lose its radiance and appear dull and lifeless.

The Karin Herzog skincare range is based on the work of Nobel Institute-honoured scientist Dr Paul Herzog who pioneered the concept of delivering oxygen to the skin through a cream, developed primarily as a hand steriliser for surgeons. The oxygen is contained in the cream in a stabilized liquid form called hydrogen peroxide. Upon contact with the skin, an enzyme converts the hydrogen peroxide from a liquid into a gas which presses the oxygen into the skin. This rush of oxygen helps to stimulate blood circulation, allowing the skin cells to function more effectively, receive nutrients and achieve proper

balance, no matter what your skin type. For those with problem skin, because the bacteria which cause many skin problems cannot survive in oxygen, such creams provide a safe alternative to other, more harsh acne and break-out treatments. Not only are these products used in the medical community to treat burns, skin ulcers and for post-surgical healing, they are also a firm favourite among beauty-conscious celebrities.

TIME FOR A TOP-UP!

Oxygen machines can now be found at selected gyms and leisure centres and there are also a number of oxygen bars throughout the country.

Here, the idea is that you can rest and revive with a ten-minute session of oxygen. Purified air, with the oxygen level of 30 per cent, is breathed in through a headset. To enhance the experience, customers can often choose from different natural essence aroma cocktails, ranging from eucalyptus to melon, to add to the mix. Oxyssessions cost from around £12 for ten minutes, plus £2.50 for an added cocktail flavour.

Always remember that if you are suffering from a medical condition or are pregnant, always seek advice from your doctor before taking any additional oxygen. **OK!**



CELEB DEVOTEES

● **Kylie Minogue, Courteney Cox, Cindy Crawford, Christy Turlington, Jennifer Aniston, and Demi Moore**

(left) are all big fans of the oxygen facial and put their healthy, glowing complexions down to a regular fix of this vital gas.

● **Uma Thurman** says: 'I have plenty of facials. And Karin Herzog's oxygen cream is a miracle in a jar.'

● Last year **Wayne Rooney** considered using oxygen treatment when he injured his foot just before the World Cup. Used by other footballers at Celtic and Dundee United, the therapy can help to accelerate recovery time after injuries.

WANT ADVICE ABOUT A HEALTH, DIET OR FITNESS PROBLEM? THEN EMAIL THE OK! HEALTH EDITOR AT HILARYB.OK@BTINTERNET.COM. UNFORTUNATELY YOUR EMAILS CANNOT BE ANSWERED PERSONALLY

ASK HILARY

Your health issues healed!

DEAR HILARY Why do I always feel starving after a workout?

● If you finish your workout at the time you usually sit down to eat, then it's perfectly logical to feel hungry. It could also be a psychological need – but just because you feel you've earned a meal doesn't mean you should go mad on the chips and ice-cream. After your workout drink a glass of water. This will help fill you up and also keep you hydrated. Follow this with a carb-rich snack such as a banana and you won't feel nearly so ravenous and likely to pig out.



DEAR HILARY I've been suffering from constipation, what can I do to help?

● Take a look at your diet and try and cut down on processed foods and up your intake of fibre by eating plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Also don't forget to drink plenty of water which helps to keep everything moving through the gut. Aim for at least eight glasses a day. Also taking a daily probiotic may help. Taking a probiotic supplement can double the frequency of bowel movements and reduce abdominal pain.

HEALTHBITES

● For Gail Porter, throwing herself into exercise has provided a lifeline from her bouts of depression: 'When you suffer from depression it takes a great deal of



effort to get yourself out of bed. But when you shove yourself into a gym, the flood of endorphins makes you feel so much better.' As well as her passion for martial arts – Gail has two black belts – she also manages to fit in three sessions of weight training a week and boxing four times a week.

● A study has revealed that career women in their thirties are delaying having children but are still risking unplanned pregnancies by not using contraception. Of those surveyed, two in five had unprotected sex in the last five years. To help more women make informed choices about contraception, Talk Choice have launched a new website www.contraceptivechoices.co.uk to offer advice.

OXYGEN BODY BOOSTERS

Give yourself a lift with these little beauties...

Karin Herzog Vita-A-Kombi 1, £46. This unique oxygen in a cream works wonders on revitalising tired, dull skin. Promotes healing for even very sensitive skins.

