Womenia

Air conditioning: How does it affect the skin?

Shahnaz Husain

Air conditioners have seen a significant surge in use in recent years, particularly in hot-climate countries like India. In today's increasingly climate-controlled world, air conditioning has evolved from a luxury into a near necessity. During scorching summers and relentless heatwaves that can break even the strongest admirers of the season, air conditioning feels like a blessing.

When temperatures become unbearable, often exceeding 40°C, the easiest solution is to switch on the AC and relax in cool air. High temperatures combined with humidity can be dangerous, leading to dehydration, heat exhaustion, and even heatstroke. As a result, people now spend much of their lives indoors under controlled cooling, moving from air-conditioned homes to cars, offices, malls, shopping centres, and gyms.

Across cities, from Delhi to Dubai, air conditioners have become less of a luxury and more of a survival tool. While AC systems provide comfort and safety, constant exposure to artificial cooling can also lead to dry skin, fine lines, dull complexion, brittle hair, and fatigue. The very machines protecting us from the heat may quietly be reshaping our wellness in ways we rarely question.

Prolonged reliance on artificial cooling can cause fatigue, lethargy, and chronic headaches, often linked to poor air circulation and low indoor humidity. Unlike sunburn or direct heat exposure, AC-related dehydration develops gradually. Many people spend extended hours in offices, cars, shopping malls, and air-conditioned bedrooms without noticing the slow loss of moisture. Symptoms usually become noticeable only after persistent dryness, itching, or changes in skin and hair texture begin to appear over time.

1. Immunity Reduction Due to Artificial Cooling

Constant dependence on air conditioning can weaken the body's natural ability to adapt to temperature changes. Drastic shifts between cold indoor environments and hot outdoor temperatures may cause "summer chills," muscle stiffness, and reduced immunity.

AC systems reduce humidity and create cold environments that draw moisture from the body, resulting in significant dryness, irritation, and brittleness. This damages the skin barrier, leading to flaking, itching, and cracked skin, while also causing dull hair and brittle nails.

Air conditioners do not simply cool the air — they strip it of moisture, and this has biological consequences. When the skin loses water, it becomes rough, tight, and flaky. Constant exposure to dry indoor air accelerates trans-epidermal water loss, a process in which moisture escapes directly from the skin and hair. This leaves the skin looking dull, tired, and dehydrated, especially after cleansing.

Dry air also causes the skin to contract, making fine lines and wrinkles appear more prominent.

2. AC Acne

Air conditioning can contribute to acne by dehydrating the skin and triggering sebaceous glands to produce excess oil. This overproduction of sebum can clog pores, leading to inflammation, breakouts, blackheads, and whiteheads, particularly in people with combination skin.

This imbalance often creates a frustrating cycle in which the skin feels dry and oily at the same time, making skincare difficult to manage. Dermatologists commonly refer to this condition as "AC acne."

3. Accelerated Ageing

Spending nearly 10 to 12 hours daily in air-conditioned environments can accelerate premature skin ageing. Cold, dry air reduces skin elasticity and may cause the skin to shrink, sag, and develop fine lines. Over time, continuous moisture loss reduces the skin's natural plumpness and elasticity, making wrinkles and signs of ageing more noticeable. Premature sagging and dullness often become visible much earlier in people who spend most of their day in heavily air-conditioned spaces.

4. Chapped Lips

Air conditioners are a major cause of dry and chapped lips because they lower indoor humidity and strip moisture from the air. The skin on the lips is thinner and more delicate than facial skin and lacks oil glands, making it especially vulnerable to dryness.

Unlike the rest of the skin, lips cannot produce natural oils to lock in moisture. As a result, prolonged exposure to dry AC environments often leads to cracking, peeling, and irritation. Moisture escapes from the lips much faster than from other areas of the face in climate-controlled spaces.

How to Protect Your Skin in Air-Conditioned Environments

By understanding how AC affects the skin, hair, and body, and by making small but consistent lifestyle changes, it is possible to maintain healthy, glowing skin despite extreme summer conditions.

One of the most important steps is staying hydrated. Drink plenty of water, soups, fresh juices, and other fluids throughout the day. Adding a pinch of salt to a litre of water may help improve cellular absorption, while occasional electrolyte supplements can support hydration further.

A diet rich in water-based foods such as cucumber, lettuce, celery, watermelon, strawberries, and oranges also helps maintain moisture levels in the body. Foods high in antioxidants — including berries, green tea, dark chocolate, and leafy greens — can protect the skin from environmental stress caused by prolonged AC exposure.

Maintaining indoor temperatures between 23°C and 25°C is considered ideal for balancing comfort and skin health. This range supports the body's natural thermoregulation while reducing excessive dryness.

Using a humidifier is another effective solution. Humidifiers release moisture back into the air-conditioned room, helping maintain healthy humidity levels and counteracting the drying effects of AC. Using a humidifier at night can significantly improve skin texture over time.

Regular application of moisturiser, lip balm, and hand cream is equally important. Reapplying these products every few hours helps restore the skin barrier and prevent moisture loss.

Keeping AC systems clean also plays a vital role in maintaining indoor air quality. Clean air filters trap dust, pollen, and other pollutants more effectively. Filters should ideally be cleaned every three months.

Older air-conditioning units may also release chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), refrigerants that are harmful to the ozone layer and contribute to environmental warming.

In addition, taking regular breaks from air-conditioned environments allows the body to adjust naturally to outdoor temperatures. This helps improve thermoregulation and reduces dependence on artificial cooling.

The key lies in maintaining hydration, protecting the skin barrier, balancing indoor humidity, and practising mindful indoor living. When these factors are addressed, comfort and healthy, youthful skin can coexist — even in a world dominated by air conditioning.

(The author is international fame beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India.)

In today's heat-driven lifestyle, air conditioners have become an essential part of daily living, offering comfort and protection from extreme temperatures. However, while ACs help us escape the harsh summer heat, prolonged exposure to artificial cooling can silently affect skin health, leading to dryness, premature ageing, acne, and dehydration

Asha Attaluri's purposeful pageant journey

Representing the Telugu states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, Asha Deepika Attaluri is all set to compete at the prestigious Cosmos Queen India 2026 grand finale in Bengaluru on May 26, 2026. If crowned, she will earn the coveted Mrs India title under the Cosmos platform and go on to represent the country at the internationally acclaimed Mrs Unity World.

An entrepreneur, technologist, philanthropist, and visionary leader, Asha's journey into pageantry is deeply rooted in purpose and service. For her, the platform extends far beyond glamour and recognition — it is an opportunity to create meaningful social impact and inspire positive transformation.

Through initiatives such as Mission Shantivan, undertaken in collaboration with the Government of Himachal Pradesh, Asha is committed to showcasing India's hidden destinations, local talent, rich culture, and heritage on the global stage. Her vision also focuses on creating sustainable opportunities in employment, healthcare, and education for underserved communities.

Having spent years working quietly behind the scenes to support social causes, Asha believes that a crown carries the responsibility to uplift lives and strengthen communities. She hopes to inspire individuals and families to embrace compassion, service, and purposeful living while proving that true beauty lies in the ability to create lasting change.

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Car protector (6)
7 Enlarged (8)
8 Qatar's capital (4)
10 Set in layers (6)
11 Prolonged shrill sound or cry (6)
14 160 in Roman numerals (3)
16 Common (5)
17 Small and cramped (4)
19 Corsican mob group (5)
21 King with the touch of gold ? (5)
22 Three ___ (or 36 months) ? (5)
23 Drunkards (4)
26 Mature (5)
28 Large Australian bird (3)
29 Experts (6)
30 Provision merchant (6)
31 Egyptian symbol of life (4)
32 Mortification (8)
33 Barely (6)

DOWN

1 Circus (3,3)
2 Under the weather (6)
3 Peruse (4)
4 French nobleman (7)
5 Au revoir (5)
6 Brief romantic affair (5)
8 Adorn (4)
9 Jinx or curse (3)
12 North American nation (3)
13 City in central Belgium (5)
15 Trained core group (5)
18 Egg-shaped (5)
19 Ms. Farrow of Hollywood (3)
20 Musical syllables (3)
21 Refer to briefly (7)
22 Yes (3)
23 Cigar enthusiast (6)
24 An expression of pain (4)
25 Grievously (6)
26 Pours down (5)
27 Copper coins (5)
28 East ender? (3)
30 Cut deeply (4)

Solution to May 22

SUDOKU

9			2	8	4			3
3		1	7		5	2		6
1	8						2	7
			4		1			
6	3						4	9
5		3	1		7	8		2
2			9	6	3			4

2	1	9	7	5	3	6	4	8
7	4	5	6	8	9	3	2	1
8	3	6	4	2	1	5	7	9
1	7	2	9	6	5	8	3	4
3	9	8	1	7	4	2	5	6
5	6	4	2	3	8	1	9	7
4	5	3	8	1	7	9	6	2
6	8	7	3	9	2	4	1	5
9	2	1	5	4	6	7	8	3

Solution to May 22

Neena Gupta says 'buddhi ho toh kya' as she enjoys vacation in hot pants

Veteran actress Neena Gupta has questioned her choices of living with her free will and what her age has to do with it.

The actress in a video on her social media account, was seen unapologetically asking 'buddhi hoon toh kya' (so what if I am old)

The actress shared a fun-filled video from her vacation where she was seen jumping around with child-like excitement on an empty road.

In the clip, Neena Gupta looked stylish in a casual white shirt paired with hot shorts and sneakers and sunglasses.

She used Dia Mirza's iconic track "Zara Zara" from the cult romantic film 'Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein' as the background score for the video.

Sharing the video on social media, Neena took a jibe at the trolls and haters always trolling her for being free spirited despite senior age. She captioned it as, "Bol do Bol do Sharmao Mat… buddhi ho toh kya?" (Say it, say it Don't be shy. I am old so what?!)

Actress Sunita Rajwar commented, "Dil toh baccha hai ji," (The heart is still childlike) while many other fans flooded the comments section with love and admiration.

For the uninitiated, Neena Gupta has often spoken openly about embracing life on her own terms.

From discussing her single motherhood, relationships or openly asking filmmakers for work on social media, Neena Gupta has never shied away.

A few years ago, the 'Badhaai Ho' actress had made headlines when she openly asked for work on social media, stating that she was out of work and shared her work profile too.

In her widely discussed post on her social media account, she had written, "I live in Mumbai and am working, I am a good actor looking for good parts to play." The post had struck a chord across the industry and among audiences, who lauded her honesty and fearlessness.