

Foods for Healthy, Supple Skin

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What to Favor

Looking to make your skin its best? Along with smart habits -- like wearing sunscreen every day -- check out what's on your plate. From fighting free radicals to smoothing fine lines, some types of foods are packed with the good stuff for glowing skin. No need to obsess about a particular "superfood" or exotic ingredient. There are plenty of options in regular grocery stores. What matters most is your overall eating pattern. In a nutshell, most people need to eat more fruits and vegetables, cut down on sugar and salt, and choose whole foods over processed ones.

Flaxseeds

These tiny brown seeds are rich in ALA (alpha-linolenic acid), a type of omega-3 fatty acid found in plants. Omega-3s are fats that are good for you because they can reduce the harmful effects of UV radiation, smoking, and pollution. They can also lessen wrinkles in your skin and improve dry skin. Flaxseed oil, which is made from pressed flaxseeds, is known to make skin smoother and to appear less scaly. Other foods that are high in omega-3 fats are chia seeds, pumpkin seeds, salmon, albacore tuna, and sardines.

Kiwis

Did you know that kiwis have more vitamin C than oranges? Kiwis are helpful foods for skin health because vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that help zaps free radicals in cells. Some studies show that vitamin C may protect skin against UV damage, help with the production of collagen, and make skin more hydrated. Eat kiwis when they're fully ripe, as this is when they have the most antioxidants. Other good sources of vitamin C include blackcurrants, blueberries, citrus fruits, guava, red peppers, parsley, strawberries, and broccoli.

Avocados

They are good sources of vitamins C and E, which are two of the many antioxidants that help protect cells from damage. Avocados also contain lutein and zeaxanthin, which some early studies show may help improve skin tone. And avocados are rich in monounsaturated fat, which (like other fats and oils) helps your body absorb certain vitamins, including A, D, E, and K.

Collards, Kale, Spinach

Really, any dark leafy green is an all-around nutritional powerhouse. You'll get a virtual alphabet of vitamins from them, including lots of the antioxidants that are skin-friendly. Some studies show that people who eat two to three servings per week of dark leafy greens are less likely to develop skin cancer.

Yogurt

Not only is yogurt packed with protein, which makes it a filling snack, it's also loaded with probiotics. Probiotics are live, friendly bacteria that help fight inflammation, including inflammation that worsens skin conditions such as acne, atopic dermatitis, and psoriasis. Probiotics can help with skin sagging and increasing skin's hydration, too. Other foods that contain probiotics are kefir, kombucha, and sauerkraut.

Green Tea

For smoother skin, try swapping a cup of coffee for green tea. Green tea is packed with polyphenols, a type of antioxidant found in tea leaves. Polyphenols help to lower the amount of sebum (oil) your body makes, and some evidence shows this makes green tea a good option to treat acne. Green tea also contains flavonoids, which help with DNA repair, and are even shown to help lessen fine lines. One study shows that you'll get the most flavonoids from green tea if you steep it in cold water for a long time.

Drink Up

Water is an easy way to give your skin a healthy glow, especially if you're prone to dry skin. You may have heard you need 8 cups a day, but there is no set advice on how much to drink. You'll get some water from food. Watermelon, cucumbers, and celery all have high water content.

Olive Oil

When it's part of a regular diet, olive oil is known to help curb inflammation. This may be because of the antioxidants in olive oil, some of which are being studied for use in products to curb eczema and psoriasis. Of the more than 200 types of chemical compounds that are naturally in olive oil, the main types of antioxidant in olive oil are called phenols.

Oily Fish

Coenzyme Q10, or CoQ10, is a vitamin-like substance found naturally in your body. CoQ10 helps with cell growth and fights against the free radicals that damage skin. One small study showed that CoQ10 supplements helped lessen fine lines and wrinkles in addition to smoothing overall skin texture. But starting in your mid-30s, levels of CoQ10 begin to drop. A poor diet and stress can also lower levels of CoQ10. But you can find plenty of CoQ10 in cold-water fish such as herring, salmon, and tuna.

Carrots

A good snack choice, these vegetables are high in beta-carotene, which protects your skin against the harmful rays of the sun. Beta-carotene is what gives plants their orange color and is found in other fruits and vegetables such as apricots, cantaloupe, mango, papaya, pumpkin, and sweet potatoes. Carrots are also a good source of magnesium, which relaxes nerves and muscles. Not getting enough magnesium can lead to poor sleep, and getting enough shut-eye is something that's always good for your skin!

Nuts

Foods that are high in vitamin E -- such as almonds, peanuts, and hazelnuts -- are helpful to counter some of the ways our skin ages. Vitamin E does this by helping to prevent collagen destruction, which is needed for skin support. Vitamin E is also a potent antioxidant that fights against cell damage caused by free radicals.

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