

Nutritional Supplements

» Good for Your Skin, Too

Like other organs in the body, the health of your skin depends on optimal care and feeding. Improvement in appearance is one of the greatest payoffs for adopting a healthy diet. Nutritional supplements also play a role in healthy-looking skin by covering gaps in the diet.

Vitamins and Minerals

As we age, our bodies produce less collagen and elastin, proteins associated with healthy, youthful-looking skin. Many of the essential micro-nutrients that help support the development of collagen and elastin are found in fruits and vegetables; however, many people do not eat enough of them.

A high-quality multivitamin and mineral helps ensure overall health, wellness and great-looking skin. Below are some key skin nutrients:

- carotenoids — Most well-known for their vitamin A activity. Healthy skin relies on vitamin A to maintain and repair skin tissue.
- vitamin C — A water-soluble vitamin that is needed for tissue growth and repair, it plays a primary role in the formation of collagen.
- vitamin E — This vitamin acts as an antioxidant, prevents the oxidation of fats, enhances UV blockers in sunscreen and is a natural moisturizer.
- vitamin B-complex — This vitamin helps maintain the health of nerves, skin, eyes, hair, liver and mouth.

Antioxidants

A primary cause of aging is related to free-radical production, which can cause deterioration of the skin's support structures. This breakdown decreases elasticity and resilience and adds to the appearance of aging.

Although our bodies and skin have multiple innate mechanisms to defend against free-radical damage, this process becomes less efficient as we age. Antioxidants may slow the aging process by reducing oxidative load. In other words, antioxidants slow "internal rusting."

Studies have demonstrated how antioxidants can benefit skin. One study found that vitamins C and E supplements, combined with the use of sunscreen, provided better protection from both UVA and UVB rays than sunscreen alone (Eberlein-König B, et al. Protective effect against sunburn of combined systemic ascorbic acid [vitamin C] and d-α-tocopherol [vitamin E]. *J Am Acad Dermatol.* 1998;38;45–48).

Here are some key antioxidants to consider adding to your daily supplement regimen:

- Alpha-lipoic acid helps neutralize skin cell damage.
- Grape seed extract strengthens collagen and helps prevent collagen destruction.
- Green tea extract contains protective compounds called polyphenols that have antioxidant activity and work as chemopreventive agents.
- Ginkgo biloba increases circulation and its anti-aging properties.
- Lutein protects the skin by absorbing blue light and quenching free radicals that may be produced in the skin after exposure to the light.
- Milk thistle contains potent liver-protecting substances. The active compound silymarin also stimulates the production of new liver cells.
- Pycnogenol possesses a broad spectrum of biologic, pharmacologic and therapeutic activities against free radicals and oxidative stress.
- Selenium is a trace mineral that inhibits the oxidation of fats and protects vitamin E.

Essential Fatty Acids

With age, our skin becomes drier. Taking an essential fatty acid (EFA) supplement can help lubricate the skin from the inside.

Although some dietary fats are considered harmful, two special types of fat are necessary for good health and youthful skin. These two fats (or fatty acids) must be obtained through diet or supplementation, hence the name essential fatty acids. Both EFAs are polyunsaturated fats: Alpha-linolenic acid belongs to the omega-3 family, and linoleic acid belongs to the omega-6 family. One excellent source of EFAs is flaxseed oil.

EFAs perform a number of vital functions in the body, but they are particularly important at the cellular level because they are a fundamental component of the membranes of all cells. An adequate supply of EFAs in the diet is also essential for healthy-looking skin.

Research has documented that better skin-aging appearance among middle-aged women is associated with higher intakes of vitamin C and linoleic acid (Cosgrove MC, et al. Dietary nutrient intakes and skin-aging appearance among middle-aged American women. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2007;86:1225–1231). Women in the study had a lower likelihood of a wrinkled appearance, dryness associated with aging (senile dryness) and skin atrophy (thinning skin). NP

This handout sponsored by:



VitaMedica®
The Science of Natural Health®

Additional Notes:
