



Tips for great skin

Keep Young and Healthy from the Inside Out

When you meet people, what do they see? Your face, your skin, that's what. Your skin condition can say a lot about your health and your lifestyle. Did you know that your skin is the largest organ of your body? An adult human skin weighs around 5kg (11lbs) and has a surface area of 2 sq. metres (22 sq. feet), which is approximately the size of a double bed. Even with your clothes on that's a lot of target for damage from the outside – injury, sunlight, cigarette smoke, environmental pollution. So your skin can be damaged by what it is exposed to, and at the same time, it reflects internal emotions (e.g. when you sweat or blush) and conditions (especially the health of your digestive system). The condition of your skin is closely dependant on what you eat and drink.

Nutrition and Your Skin

Nutrition is fundamentally involved at every stage of your skin development. Collagen makes up 70% of your skin and depends on vitamin C. Dry, rough skin (caused by the build up the protein keratin on the outer layers) can be prevented by Vitamin A. The membranes of skin cells are made from essential fats. Dry skin can be caused by a lack of these fats. The flexibility of your skin is reduced as you get older mainly because of oxidation damage caused by free radicals – from pollution, cigarette smoke, fried and burnt foods, sunlight. This damage can be limited by nutrients such as vitamins A, C, E and selenium. Lack of zinc can lead to stretch marks and slow wound healing, and is associated with a wide variety of skin problems from acne to eczema.

Foods to Keep You Young and Beautiful

Foods that can enhance your appearance need to feature as many of the following as possible: antioxidants, antibacterials, fibre to clear toxins, essential fats to support skin and reduced levels of saturated fat and sugar.

The sorts of foods where you'll get this kind of combination are fresh fruit and vegetables, wholegrains, fish, pulses, nuts and seeds.

So, to improve your skin, include the following in your diet:

- Apricots, cantaloupe melon, carrots, eggs, liver, pumpkin, red peppers, watercress - contain Vitamin A and beta carotene.
- Blackcurrants, broccoli, citrus fruits, kiwi fruit, papaya, peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, sweet potatoes and sprouted seeds – contain Vitamin C.
- Almonds, avocado, eggs, hazelnuts, olive oil, Sunflower seeds, walnuts – contain Vitamin E.
- Brazil nuts, cabbage, chicken, eggs, liver, molasses, mushrooms, onions, seafood, tuna – contain Selenium.
- Almonds, chicken, cauliflower, carrots, cucumber, eggs, oats, potatoes, sardines, tuna – contain Zinc.

reduce your intake of these:

- Alcohol
- Coffee/tea (no more than 2 cups per day)
- Sugar
- Saturated fat (found in meat and dairy products)
- Cigarettes

and think about these other factors:

- Avoid strong sunlight and use a moisturiser with at least SPF15 in (sunlight causes oxidative damage and speeds the ageing process of your skin).
- Wash your skin with a gentle oil-based cleanser, not soap, and consider what is in your skin products such as your moisturiser (many cosmetics contains strong petroleum/alcohol based substances –remember these are absorbed through the skin).
- Take regular exercise (it stimulates blood flow, which will enhance delivery of oxygen and nutrients to your skin cells).
- Drink plenty of water (6-8 glasses per day (1- 1½ litres)) to hydrate the skin. Too little water can be a major factor in dry skin.
- Consider taking some nutritional supplements: a good quality multivitamin and mineral supplement; vitamin C; an antioxidant blend (containing at least vitamins A, C, E, zinc and selenium); and an essential fatty acid supplement (linseed oil, fish oil or evening primrose oil or oil blend). Remember supplements should be considered as an addition to a good diet and healthy lifestyle, not a replacement for one.
- Use a skin brush for your body (upward strokes working from feet to torso) and an exfoliation cream for your face. Exfoliation helps to clear blocked pores and smooth away dead, dry skin.

If that sounds a lot to think about, don't let it put you off. You can have the skin you deserve, the skin that reflects a healthier you. Just take it step by step. First introduce apricots, cantaloupe melon etc (the Vitamin A foods). Then when you've worked through introducing the healthier range of foods, start reducing the alcohol and sugar. In no time at all you'll be on the road to better health and better skin.