



Nutrition for your skin

Nutrition is important for health. An unhealthy diet can damage your metabolism, cause weight gain and even hurt organs, such as your heart and liver.

But what you eat also impacts *another* organ — your skin.

As scientists learn more about diet and the body, it's increasingly clear that what you eat can significantly affect the health and aging of your skin.

Below are 12 of the best foods for keeping your skin healthy.

1. Fatty Fish

Fatty fish, such as salmon, mackerel and herring, are excellent foods for healthy skin. They are rich sources of omega-3 fatty acids, which are important for maintaining skin health.

Omega-3 fatty acids are necessary to keep skin thick, supple and moisturized. In fact, a deficiency in omega-3 fats can cause dry skin.

The omega-3 fats in fish reduce inflammation, which can cause redness and acne. They can even make your skin less sensitive to the sun's harmful UV rays.

Some studies show that fish oil supplements may fight inflammatory and autoimmune conditions affecting your skin, such as psoriasis and lupus.

Fatty fish is also a source of vitamin E, one of the most important antioxidants for your skin. Getting enough vitamin E is essential for protecting your skin against damage from free radicals and inflammation.

This type of seafood is also a source of high-quality protein, which is needed for maintaining the strength and integrity of your skin.

Lastly, fish provides zinc — a mineral vital for regulating inflammation, the production of new skin cells and overall skin health. Zinc deficiency can lead to skin inflammation, lesions and delayed wound healing.

SUMMARY

Fatty types of fish, such as salmon, contain omega-3 fatty acids that can reduce inflammation and keep skin moisturized. They're also a good source of high-quality protein, vitamin E and zinc.

2. Avocados

Avocados are high in healthy fats. These fats benefit many functions in your body, including the health of your skin.

Getting enough of these fats is essential to keep skin flexible and moisturized.

One study in over 700 women found that a high intake of total fat — specifically the types of healthy fats found in avocados — was associated with more supple, springy skin.



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Preliminary evidence also shows that avocados contain compounds that may protect your skin from sun damage. UV damage to your skin can cause wrinkles and other signs of aging.

Avocados are also a good source of vitamin E, which is an important antioxidant that helps protect your skin from oxidative damage. Most Americans don't get enough vitamin E through their diet.

Interestingly, vitamin E seems to be more effective when combined with vitamin C.

Vitamin C is also essential for healthy skin. Your skin needs it to create collagen, which is the main structural protein that keeps your skin strong and healthy.

A deficiency in vitamin C is rare these days, but common symptoms include dry, rough and scaly skin that tends to bruise easily.

Vitamin C is also an antioxidant that protects your skin from oxidative damage — caused by the sun and the environment — which can lead to signs of aging.

SUMMARY

Avocados are high in beneficial fats and contain vitamins E and C, which are important for healthy skin. They also pack compounds that may protect your skin from sun damage.

3. Walnuts

Walnuts have many characteristics that make them an excellent food for healthy skin.

They are a good source of essential fatty acids, which are fats that your body cannot make itself.

In fact, they're richer than most other nuts in both omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids.

A diet too high in omega-6 fats may promote inflammation, including inflammatory conditions of your skin like psoriasis. On the other hand, omega-3 fats reduce inflammation in your body — including in your skin.

While omega-6 fatty acids are plentiful in the Western diet, sources of omega-3 fatty acids are rare. Because walnuts contain a good ratio of these fatty acids, they may fight the inflammatory response to excessive omega-6.

What's more, walnuts contain other nutrients that your skin needs to function properly and stay healthy.

SUMMARY

Walnuts are a good source of essential fats, zinc, vitamin E, vitamin C, selenium and protein — all of which are nutrients your skin needs to stay healthy.



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4. Sunflower Seeds

In general, nuts and seeds are good sources of skin-boosting nutrients.

Sunflower seeds are an excellent example.

SUMMARY

Sunflower seeds are an excellent source of nutrients, including vitamin E, which is an important antioxidant for the skin.

5. Sweet Potatoes

Beta-carotene is a nutrient found in plants.

It functions as provitamin A, which means it can be converted into vitamin A in your body.

Beta-carotene is found in oranges and vegetables such as carrots, spinach and sweet potatoes.

Carotenoids like beta-carotene keep your skin healthy by acting as a natural sunblock.

When consumed, this antioxidant is incorporated into your skin and protects your skin cells from sun exposure. This may help prevent sunburn, cell death and dry, wrinkled skin.

Interestingly, high amounts of beta-carotene may also add a warm, orange color to your skin, contributing to an overall healthier appearance.

SUMMARY

Sweet potatoes are an excellent source of beta-carotene, which acts as a natural sunblock and may protect your skin from sun damage.

6. Red or Yellow Bell Peppers

Like sweet potatoes, bell peppers are an excellent source of beta-carotene, which your body converts into vitamin A.

They're also one of the best sources of vitamin C, necessary for creating the protein collagen which keeps skin firm and strong.

A large observational study in women linked eating plenty of vitamin C to a reduced risk of wrinkled and dry skin with age.

SUMMARY

Bell peppers contain plenty of beta-carotene and vitamin C — both of which are important antioxidants for your skin. Vitamin C is also necessary to create collagen, the structural protein that keeps your skin strong.

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7. Broccoli

Broccoli is full of many vitamins and minerals important for skin health, including zinc, vitamin A and vitamin C.

It also contains lutein, a carotenoid that works like beta-carotene. Lutein protects your skin from oxidative damage, which can cause your skin to become dry and wrinkled.

But broccoli florets also pack a special compound called sulforaphane, which boasts some impressive potential benefits. It may even have anti-cancer effects, including on some types of skin cancer.

Sulforaphane is also a powerful protective agent against sun damage. It works in two ways: by neutralizing harmful free radicals and switching on other protective systems in your body.

In laboratory tests, sulforaphane reduced the number of skin cells killed by UV light by as much as 29%, with protection lasting up to 48 hours. Evidence suggests sulforaphane may also maintain collagen levels in your skin.

SUMMARY

Broccoli is a good source of vitamins, minerals and carotenoids that are important for skin health. It also contains sulforaphane, which may help prevent skin cancer and protect your skin from sunburn.

8. Tomatoes

Tomatoes are a great source of vitamin C and contain all of the major carotenoids, including lycopene.

Beta-carotene, lutein and lycopene have been shown to protect your skin against damage from the sun. They may also help prevent wrinkling.

Because tomatoes contain all of the major carotenoids, they're an excellent food for maintaining healthy skin.

Consider pairing carotenoid-rich foods like tomatoes with a source of fat, such as cheese or olive oil. Fat increases your absorption of carotenoids.

SUMMARY

Tomatoes are a good source of vitamin C and all of the major carotenoids, especially lycopene. These carotenoids protect your skin from sun damage and may help prevent wrinkling.

9. Soy

Soy contains isoflavones, a category of plant compounds that can either mimic or block estrogen in your body.

Isoflavones may benefit several parts of your body, including your skin.

One small study in middle-aged women found that eating soy isoflavones every day for 8–12 weeks reduced fine wrinkles and improved skin elasticity.



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In postmenopausal women, soy may also improve skin dryness and increase collagen, which helps keep your skin smooth and strong.

These isoflavones not only protect the cells inside your body from damage but also your skin from UV radiation — which may help prevent some skin cancers.

SUMMARY

Soy contains isoflavones, which have been shown to improve wrinkles, collagen, skin elasticity and skin dryness, as well as protect your skin from UV damage.

10. Dark Chocolate

If you need one more reason to eat chocolate, here it is: The effects of cocoa on your skin are pretty phenomenal.

After 6–12 weeks of consuming a cocoa powder high in antioxidants each day, participants in one study experience thicker, more hydrated skin.

Their skin was also less rough and scaly, less sensitive to sunburn and had better blood flow — which brings more nutrients to your skin.

Another study found that eating 20 grams of high-antioxidant dark chocolate per day could allow your skin to withstand over twice as much UV radiation before burning versus eating low-antioxidant chocolate.

Several other studies have produced similar results, including improvements in the appearance of wrinkles. However, keep in mind that at least one study did not find significant effects.

Make sure to choose dark chocolate with at least 70% cocoa in order to maximize the benefits and keep added sugar to a minimum.

SUMMARY

Cocoa contains antioxidants that may protect your skin against sunburn. These antioxidants may also improve wrinkles, skin thickness, hydration, blood flow and skin texture.

11. Green Tea

Green tea may protect your skin from damage and aging.

The powerful compounds found in green tea are called catechins and work to improve the health of your skin in several ways.

Like several other antioxidant-containing foods, green tea can help protect your skin against sun damage.

One 12-week study in 60 women found that drinking green tea daily could reduce redness from sun exposure by up to 25%. Green tea also improved the moisture, roughness, thickness and elasticity of their skin.

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While green tea is a great choice for healthy skin, you may want to avoid drinking your tea with milk. There's evidence that milk could reduce the impact of green tea's antioxidants.

SUMMARY

The catechins found in green tea are powerful antioxidants that can protect your skin against sun damage and reduce redness as well as improve its hydration, thickness and elasticity.

12. Red Wine

Red wine is famous for containing resveratrol, a compound that comes from the skin of red grapes.

Resveratrol is credited with a wide range of health benefits, among them reducing the effects of aging.

Test-tube studies suggest it may also slow the production of harmful free radicals, which damage skin cells and cause signs of aging.

Unfortunately, there's not much evidence that the amount of resveratrol you get from a glass of red wine is enough to impact your skin. And since red wine is an alcoholic beverage, there are negative effects to drinking it in excess.

It's not recommended to start drinking red wine just because of its potential health benefits. However, if you already drink in moderation, you might enjoy red wine as your alcoholic beverage of choice.

SUMMARY

Resveratrol, the famous antioxidant found in red wine, may slow your skin's aging process by impairing harmful free radicals that damage your skin.

The Bottom Line

What you eat can have a big impact on your skin health.

Make sure you're getting enough essential nutrients to protect your skin. The foods on this list are great options to keep your skin healthy, strong and attractive.

