

NUTRIENTS to Promote Healthy Skin

By Judith Beto, RD

Web ID: 4030

As an organ, skin needs proper nutrients to be healthy and stay healthy. Many foods pack in more than one nutrient for skin health. Therefore, getting proper nutrition and maintaining normal lab values are essential to keeping your skin happy and looking good.

This list was created to help you develop a platform for having a robust discussion with your healthcare team. Always consult your dietitian or doctor to learn your specific nutritional requirements, prevent any medication side effects, and check safety of oral nutrient supplements.



Healthy Fats

Choose monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. These plant-based oils help your skin stay firm and moist, and are better for your heart than saturated fats. Omega 3 fatty acids provide many health benefits and can reduce inflammation that can lead to skin and cell damage. Seafood, plant-based oils, English walnuts, and Omega 3 eggs are some foods that are rich in Omega 3s. Supplements are also available.

Protein

Your body needs protein, and protein is made up of building blocks called amino acids. Collagen and keratin are proteins that form the structure of skin. Keratin is the main protein in your skin, and makes up hair, nails, and the surface layer of the skin. Amino acids help shed old skin and can offer protection against UV rays and free radicals. Eggs, meats, and plant-based proteins are good sources for protein.



Zinc

Your skin has many layers and zinc can help your skin heal after a wound or injury. Zinc will not increase hair growth but can help with hair loss and appetite. Meats, eggs, shellfish, and legumes are good choices for getting adequate zinc. Supplements are also an option.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C helps produce collagen, a protein that your skin needs to even out skin tones and prevent wrinkling. Vitamin C deficiency can cause your skin to bruise easily. Many topical vitamin C creams and serums are available to apply directly to your skin. Foods that contain vitamin C and are low in potassium are strawberries, grapes, and lemons.



Advanced Glycation End Products (AGEs)

AGEs are compounds that can cause structural changes in skin when they build up. Spices and herbs such as garlic, cinnamon, cloves, oregano, and ginger can reduce the production of these compounds. Also, moist heat cooking methods such as stewing, steaming, poaching, or boiling can reduce the intake of AGEs, and therefore are healthier than dry, high-heat cooking methods like grilling outside or broiling.

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