



Nutrition and Skin Health



Healthy youthful skin is up there at the top of wish lists with many spending a fortune on skin care. If you feel like you have lost your "glow" or simply wish to maintain your good complexion, then read on for some top food and lifestyle tips for your glow from within complexion.

Is good skin in our genes?

The majority of us are born with healthy supple skin. However, as we age our skin becomes less resilient to everyday wear and tear. The great news is that it's not all related to our genes. 80-90% is down to how we live which we can do something about!

Causes of wrinkles, dryness and dehydrated skin

- Smoking
- Prolonged exposure to the sun and sun beds
- Excessive alcohol intake
- A poor diet
- Lack of sleep
- Too much stress
- Your genes!

Feeding your skin from the inside

It may be reassuring to know that no foods should be completely avoided and there are also no special foods that have to be eaten for a healthy glow. Certain vitamins and minerals have an important role to play in skin health e.g. Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Riboflavin, Niacin, Pyridoxine, Vitamin E, Zinc and Selenium. Deficiencies of these have been shown to cause skin problems. However the good news is that a varied diet provides all these nutrients.

1. Variety is Key

The most important food tip is to choose a wide range of foods. This is essential. No one food or food group can supply all the nutrients that our skin and bodies need.

The overall evidence from numerous studies points towards following healthy eating guidelines which ensures an optimal intake of all the vital nutrients for skin health and anti-ageing. Moreover, a healthy balanced diet provides a rich supply of antioxidants

which have been proven to help protect and repair our skin.

Enjoying a healthy balanced diet means choosing a variety of foods from each food group in the right proportions.

The FSA eatwell plate is a great place to start for information on food balance and portion sizes. Take a look at <http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/healthydiet/eatwellplate/>



Free radicals and antioxidants

Free radicals are by-products of normal bodily processes including eating and breathing, whilst others result from environmental factors such as smoking, pollution and UV sunlight. Too many of them can cause damage to our bodies. In the skin, over time, free radical damage can result in premature ageing of the skin and possibly skin cancer. Antioxidants help to counteract these 'threats' to the skin by binding to free radicals making them harmless. Additionally, antioxidants will work to repair damaged skin cells. Fruit and vegetables are a great source of antioxidants.

Variety is the absolute key and if you can achieve this, eating in the right proportions, all the nutrients that you need for a healthy glow can naturally fall into place without you having to think about it too much.

2. Don't forget to drink plenty

It is vital for healthy skin, to drink plenty of fluids: six to eight glasses a day in the UK climate. This can include: water, tea and juice. Plenty of fluid gives skin the necessary moisture and a dewy look. Plus it helps to clear the body of toxins.

3. If you drink, enjoy alcohol sensibly

Too much alcohol can cause dehydration which affects skin appearance. A chronic high intake of alcohol can also cause wrinkles (as well as the underlying damage to the liver, blood pressure and heart!).

Experts recommend sticking to 1-2 units a day if you are a woman and 2-3 units a day if you are a man, aiming to have alcohol free days. A unit is ½ pint of normal strength beer, a small glass (100ml) of wine or a pub measure of spirits (25ml).

What about chocolate?

There is some good news for the chocolate lovers out there: as well as getting your daily chocolate hit, dark chocolate (a couple of small squares a day!) won't do your skin any harm!

What about chocolate and acne?

Although the association between acne and fatty foods was dismissed it has now been postulated that a high refined carbohydrate intake may result in hyperinsulinaemia, thereby increasing androgen production, associated with acne. One



clinical trial has suggested that a low glycaemic index (GI) diet may be beneficial. - see the BDA Glycaemic Index (GI) fact sheet for further information about GI.

What about supplementation?

Food and drink come first in terms of adequately nourishing our skin and our health. While certain nutrients are important for skin health it doesn't mean more is better. If you are following a varied and balanced diet there is no need for any supplementation. However, if you are concerned that you may not be getting all your essential nutrients from your food one would be advised to gain an assessment from a registered dietitian. Speak to your GP or log onto www.bda.uk.com - the website of the British Dietetic Association, or www.dietitiansunlimited.co.uk to find a dietitian.

Feeding your skin from the outside

Protect yourself from the sun

A very important step in taking care of your skin is to protect it from the sun. Ultraviolet light - invisible but intense rays of the sun - can damage skin, causing wrinkles, dry, rough skin, and more serious disorders, such as non cancerous (benign) and cancerous (malignant) skin tumors. The advice is to use sunscreen to avoid burning (at least 15SPF for adults and 30+SPF for children). For further information about how to protect yourself from the sun visit:

- www.cancerresearchuk.org
and
- www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk

Other topical skincare creams and sprays

Many skincare products such as lotions and creams often highlight the benefits of applying antioxidants directly to the skin. If they are from a reputable manufacturer there can be benefits. However, remember that they will only work effectively if applied regularly and there is the cost to consider. It is cheaper to provide these nutrients from food. Most dermatologists will advise those with normal skin to apply a good quality moisturiser daily.

Other essential tips

Don't smoke

Research shows that smoking can accelerate the normal ageing process of skin, contributing to wrinkles. Skin changes from smoking can be seen in young adults who have been smoking for as few as 10 years. For help on quitting call the NHS Smoking Helpline 0800 169 0 169.

Make time for relaxation and sleep

Research has shown that too much stress can affect our skin health. In our fast moving pace of life, making regular time for relaxation is something we can often

forget to do. Plenty of sleep is necessary to help prevent not only puffy but bloodshot eyes and dark under circle eyes and even a pale washed out complexion.



Be active

A good exercise routine including aerobic activity like dancing, running, fast walking etc will improve blood flow helping to activate and

rejuvenate the skin. Also, body sweat triggers production of a substance called sebum, which is one of the skin's own natural moisturisers.

In conclusion

So why not start today! Get proactive in helping to prevent wrinkles and achieving a healthy glow. As an additional bonus feel healthy and full of vitality! Start feeding your face from the inside as well as taking care on the outside. Make changes gradually. Make enjoyable choices and aim to be maintaining these changes in one, two and three months and for the rest of your life and watch that skin start to glow! Good luck!