

Healthy Skin: Part One



Skin is the largest and fastest growing organ in our body, and for centuries we've been fascinated with ways to nourish our skin so that it's glow-

ing and beautiful. Collagen and elastin are the proteins in skin that give skin strength and the ability to stretch. As we get older, a decrease in collagen and elastin leads to weaker, drier, and less elastic skin which contributes to wrinkles and sagging. Just as healthy foods nourish our internal body, healthy foods also play an important role in nourishing and protecting our skin.

Carbohydrate, protein, fat, vitamins and minerals work together to help our skin protect our internal organs from environmental toxins such as air pollution and ultraviolet rays from the sun as well as internal toxins including cigarette smoke and alcohol.

60% of our body is made of **water**, and the water content of our skin plays a crucial role in healthy, vibrant skin. A 2015 study showed that women who drank a little more than 1 gallon of water per day had improved skin hydration, which means less dry, flaky skin.

Vitamin C helps stabilize collagen, enhance selenium absorption, and decrease the amount of skin damage caused by free radicals, unstable molecules formed by poor diet, stress, smoking, alcohol, exercise, inflamma-

tion, drugs or exposure to sunlight and air pollutants.

Antioxidants like vitamin C neutralize free radicals to decrease the damage they can cause both internally and to our skin. One serving of each of these foods provides 100% of the recommended daily amount of vitamin C:

- ½ cup red bell pepper
- ¾ cup orange juice
- 1 medium orange
- ¾ cup grapefruit juice
- 1 medium kiwi
- ½ cup green bell pepper

Other good sources of vitamin C include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, strawberries and grapefruit. Cooking decreases vitamin C content of foods, so eat these foods raw whenever possible.

Vitamin E is the name of a group of fat-soluble vitamins that are powerful antioxidants and work together with Vitamin C to repair skin damage caused by ultraviolet light and protect the skin's collagen layer. Nuts, seeds, safflower oil, sunflower oil, and peanut butter are good sources of vitamin E.

Selenium is a mineral that is another important antioxidant that can help protect our skin. 1 ounce of Brazil nuts contains over 700% of the recommended daily amount of selenium. The primary food sources of selenium are whole grains, seafood, poultry and eggs. Selenium is lost when grains are processed, so choose 100% whole grain bread, cereals and crackers for the most benefit.

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