



R&WB Article

Best Foods For The Skin To Make It Healthy & Beautiful

When it comes to proper nutrition for a healthy, youthful complexion, you need to know both what to eat and what to avoid.

If you really want beautiful skin, do the same things you would do to strengthen your heart, control your weight, lift your mood and live longer and better: Get regular exercise, sleep enough and eat well.

Discovery Health suggests a number of foods to look at if you want a beautiful-skin diet. Here are a few of their suggestions:

Nuts

The benefits of nuts — especially almonds — have to do with antioxidant activity. Vitamin E fights skin-aging free radicals, and also helps your skin hold in moisture.

Red and Green Vegetables

Orange-red vegetables are full of beta-carotene. Your body converts beta-carotene into vitamin A, which prevents cell

damage and premature aging. Spinach and other green, leafy foods provide lots of vitamin A, too.

Citrus Fruits

Vitamin C aids in your body's production of collagen, which is the protein that forms the basic structure of your skin. Collagen breakdown can leave your skin saggy, and vitamin C will help tighten it back up.

The *real* "fountain of youth" is a healthy diet and lifestyle. Without this foundation, no amount of creams and potions will alter the look and feel of your skin to any great degree. In fact, your complexion reveals a lot about your diet and overall health.



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Foods with a Detrimental Impact on Your Complexion

When it comes to proper nutrition for a healthy, youthful complexion, you need to know both what to eat *and* what to avoid. Loading up on certain skin-clearing foods while still eating some of the most damaging will likely not make a significant impact.

For example, insulin and leptin resistance are major accelerants of the aging processes, which affect both your inside and outside, so it's important to keep your insulin and leptin levels *low* if you want to maintain a youthful look—not to mention optimal health.

The most effective way to do this is by reducing or eliminating grains and sugar, especially fructose, in your diet. What this means is, if you want to get the benefits from the foods I'll discuss below, you may also want to skip the soda...

Drugs and alcohol are clearly enemies of a glowing complexion, but processed foods, trans fats, processed table salt, and pasteurized dairy products are also common culprits.

Clear Skin Begins *Inside* Your Body

Donna Gates, author of *The Body Ecology Diet* offers great advice on how to improve your complexion through your diet and explains why foods have such a profound impact on your skin.

In a nutshell, in order to have clear, healthy skin, you need to make sure your body is relatively free of toxins, so cleansing your body of dangerous substances while putting in the finest nutrients is essential.

The organs responsible for providing you with beautiful skin include your liver, kidneys, adrenals, thyroid, and your large- and small intestines.

Your liver and kidneys are the two organs that filter out impurities on an ongoing basis. If your diet is less than ideal, these two organs can easily become overtaxed, which can lead to breakouts and other skin problems.

Your adrenals make many essential hormones, such as pregnenolone, DHEA, estrogen, progesterone and testosterone. Hormonal imbalances can also result in problematic skin conditions, so adrenal function is important as well.

A well-nourished, energetic **thyroid** also provides hormones and works closely with your adrenals to create energy. Dry, flaky, sluggish skin can be evidence of a weak thyroid.

Your small- and large intestines provide nutrients to all your organs and remove waste products from your body. When waste meant for elimination remains in your intestines your skin becomes thick, oily and blemished. Pure, flawless skin is typically a reflection of clean intestines.

Eating a healthy diet that focuses on whole, bioavailable organic foods, is your number one strategy for helping your body detox naturally while supplying the necessary nutrients your body needs to thrive. That said, some foods are particularly effective at promoting beautiful, clear skin.

Foods that Promote Beautiful Skin

One of the first strategies you can use to improve your skin health is to make sure you are getting enough high quality omega-3 fats. This is such a reliable indicator that I can usually tell someone's omega-3 needs just by shaking their hand. If their hand is not smooth as a baby's behind, it's usually a strong indication that they're deficient.

If you struggle with dry skin, make sure you are taking enough omega-3 fats. In the colder dry winter months, you may need to increase your dose. Vegetables are also essential for creating healthy, beautiful skin.

Vegetables are high in both water and nutrients (including essential minerals), and promote optimal functioning of your natural detoxification systems. For example, healthy liver function is supported by dark green leafy veggies, such as:

- Kale
- Spinach
- Dandelion greens
- Broccoli

In general, you'll want to include plenty of raw, whole foods in your diet, including raw dairy, if you have no dairy allergies, as this is another of the central keys to maintaining youthful skin. Notice I mentioned dairy as being a potentially detrimental food at the beginning of this article, but that's *pasteurized* dairy.

It's not the food itself that causes the problem, but rather it's the way it's altered from its natural state that makes it damaging to your health. *Raw* dairy will not typically have a detrimental effect on your skin. Other foods known to contribute to healthy skin include raw and virgin fats and oils. Coconut oil is especially good for your thyroid. You'll also want to include plenty of antioxidant-rich foods in your diet. Most berries fall into this category.

Another group of foods worth mentioning are fermented or cultured foods.

Fermented foods help promote the growth of friendly intestinal bacteria and aid in digestion. They also support healthy immune function, including an increase in B vitamins, omega-3, digestive enzymes, lactase and lactic acid, and other immune chemicals that fight off harmful bacteria.

One of the BEST Foods for Your Skin

One of the most profoundly effective ways to create the most attractive glow for your skin is by consuming vegetables and fruits that are high in carotenoids. Carotenoids, which include carotene and xanthophylls, give red, orange and yellow fruits their color, and also occur in green vegetables. Studies have shown that eating foods with these deeply colored pigments can make your face actually look healthier than being tanned.

The more red and yellow tones found in your skin, the more attractive the people were found to be. The redder tones are caused when people are flushed with blood, particularly if the blood has lots of oxygen in it. Dr. Stephan found that, given the choice between skin color caused by suntan and skin color caused by carotenoids, people preferred the carotenoid skin color, so if you want a healthier and more attractive skin color, you are better off eating a healthy diet.

Research studies published last month were consistent with the evolutionary benefit of selecting a potential mate whose appearance signals good health.

“This is something we share with many other species,” noted coauthor Professor David Perrett, PhD, who is the head of the Perception Lab at St Andrews. “For example, the bright yellow beaks and feathers of many birds can be thought of as adverts showing how healthy a male bird is. What’s more, females of these species prefer to mate with brighter, more colored males. But this is the first study in which this has been demonstrated in humans.”

“Together our studies link skin carotenoid coloration to both perceived health and healthy diet, establishing carotenoid coloration as a valid cue to human health which is perceptible in a way that is relevant to mate choice, as it is in bird and fish species,”

What this research failed to evaluate though is what, in my opinion, is the hottest new antioxidant on the market, astaxanthin. Astaxanthin is derived from marine algae. It is what gives salmon and pink flamingos their color. Not only is it a potent antioxidant, but it is probably the most potent natural anti-inflammatory we know of, and it is likely to help prevent cataracts, macular degeneration and get this, sunburn!

Other Lifestyle Factors that Impact Your Skin

Exercise is another crucial factor for beautiful skin. A good night’s sleep and properly addressing emotional stresses are additional keys to regaining your optimum physical appearance.

What You Put ON Your Skin Matters Too!

There's much controversy over whether or not certain ingredients can have an actual impact on your skin when applied topically. Oxidation, caused by free radicals, is associated with premature aging of your skin. As mentioned earlier, consuming antioxidant-rich foods is one part of the puzzle to prevent premature skin damage.

Antioxidants may also offer protection against this kind of damage when applied topically. However, it can be tricky finding products that contain these ingredients in sufficient amounts to make a difference. Skin care products are notorious for containing a slew of dangerous chemicals, while promoting healthful ingredients found only in miniscule amounts.

It's very important to realize that nearly everything you put on your skin is absorbed into your body, so you need to investigate ALL the ingredients in your personal care products. The fact that something contains antioxidants, for example, is no guarantee that it's beneficial. It all depends on what else is lurking in that jar.

I firmly believe that you need to approach topical skin care as you approach your diet, and only feed your skin the best ingredients from nature, forgoing toxic chemicals at all costs.

Feeding Your Skin from the Outside-In

You may not realize this, but a large portion of the toxins you're exposed to on a daily basis comes *through your skin*, not just through what you put in your mouth. Your skin is actually the largest organ of your body, and it's highly absorbent. Women absorb an estimated five pounds of chemicals a year just from the makeup they use!

Therefore, **you want to give your skin the same thoughtful care you give your internal organs.** Having a great diet while slathering toxins on your skin is counterproductive, to say the least.

Personally, if I'm not willing to eat it, I won't put it on my skin.

Sources:

Discovery Health December 2010

Dr. Mercola January 17, 2011