

FEED YOUR SKIN

How to eat your way to youthful-looking skin - by Melissa Hershberg, M.D.

Diet affects everything in your body: hair, skin, nails, heart, mood, weight, hormones, sleep, bones and of course, your health. Food fills you up and gives you pleasure but it also plays a vital role in determining how you look, feel, and age. You are a walking product of everything you've chosen to eat, so why not give your body the best possible ingredients to work with?



The Good Basics:

Load up on these foods to keep your skin soft, glowing and strong at every age.

- Orange/red fruits and veggies - such as tomatoes, squash and carrots - are loaded with beta-carotene, a type of carotenoid antioxidant, which is essential for healthy skin, scalp, and mucous membranes.
- Crustaceans and fish are rich in astaxanthin, another extremely potent antioxidant that protects the skin from environmental damage, age spots and wrinkling. Try salmon, roe (fish eggs), crabs, shrimp, and lobster.
- Nuts and Seeds are rich in Vitamin E, which has cell protective properties and thus helps to protect the skin from UV sun damage.
- Citrus fruits, like oranges and grapefruit, are high in Vitamin C, which is required for the production of collagen, the "glue like" substance that gives connective tissue its strength and resilience.
- Unrefined whole grains - such as wheat, barley, oats, and rye, are excellent sources of silica; this mineral which can also be taken in supplement form, helps to repair aging and damaged skin, hair and nails as it strengthens collagen and elastin fibers which naturally tend to weaken as one ages.

The Big No-Nos:

Avoid most white and beige carbohydrates. These foods like chips, cookies, crackers, French fries, croissants, doughnuts, white rice, bread, and pasta, are age accelerators. Their high sugar, low fiber content results in spikes in blood sugar and insulin, which sets the body up for insulin insensitivity and resultantly, chronically high levels of insulin. Insulin is a growth factor that prematurely ages the body. Even worse, it is believed that insulin insensitivity plays a role in the development of all chronic diseases of aging - cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, obesity, diabetes, and cancer.

The Anti-Aging Super-Foods:

Include anti-aging super-foods in your diet. Top picks are: deeply pigmented fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, spinach, cabbage, broccoli, berries and grapes; garlic and onions; green tea; soybeans and related food sources such as tofu and miso; cold-water fish such as salmon, mackerel, and herring; and spices such as turmeric, cinnamon, and cumin. Here's why:



- They're rich in phytochemicals. These are the molecules responsible for the striking colors, odors, and tastes associated with plant-based foods; the deep red of a raspberry and the bitter astringent quality of green tea, for example. They defend plants against infection and environmental damage, and have been found to have profound anti cancer activity in humans. And, like antioxidants, they help protect the body from the effects of harmful free radicals that damage DNA and trigger vascular diseases.
- They contain omega-3 fatty acids, which promote longevity by decreasing cholesterol, improving insulin sensitivity, reducing inflammation, and facilitating weight loss. Dark leafy greens, coldwater fish, soybeans, tofu, and miso are excellent sources.
- They are thermogenic or "hotty" foods that encourage the body to burn calories and heat up simply from eating them. Plus, their high fiber or high water content means that they have low energy densities, so they fill you up for very calories - great for encouraging weight loss.

In addition to the specific nutrient benefits mentioned above, there are many indirect benefits of healthy eating that affect the aging process. A balanced diet of phytochemical rich fruits and veggies, omega-3 containing fish and soy foods, fibre-rich whole grains, nuts and seeds, and plenty of water will improve your sleep, mood, and energy. You will feel better, look better, and be better equipped to live each and every day to the fullest.