

Beautifully **Healthy** from the Inside Out

The most **powerful skin regimen is found** in the produce aisle

By Kristine Sarna, M.D.



Moms have been advocating vitamins for children for as long as they've been available in Flintstone form; but did mom realize that, aside from strong bones and a healthy immune system, these important vitamins are essential for preventing and slowing the aging of beautiful skin? For the women of today who long to age gracefully, nutrition is the panacea for success. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables every day will keep you looking and feeling healthy from the inside and out.

Here are some of the top vitamins and nutrients vitally important to keeping your skin young and healthy for life.

VITAMIN A is the most recognized nutrient for the skin. It is the active ingredient in both Retin A and Accutane, which are medications for the treatment of acne, fine lines and wrinkles. Vitamin A supports skin-cell turnover, a process that keeps cell growth and development healthy. Without Vitamin A, the skin becomes dry, tough and scaly. Certain dark green vegetables such as *spinach*, *turnip greens* and *broccoli* deliver healthy doses of Vitamin A.

VITAMIN C is another top-of-the-list nutrient in the anti-aging world. Vitamin C is not only a great antioxidant as it prevents oxidative stress on the skin from environmental exposures, but it also keeps collagen, the supportive fibers of the skin, strong and resilient. Without Vitamin C, the skin sags and wrinkles. Some of the best sources of Vitamin C are *oranges*, *lemons*, *limes* and *grapefruit*. To prevent wrinkles, eat citrus every day!

ANTIOXIDANTS are essential for the health of every cell in your body. They destroy free radicals that would otherwise damage and destroy cells. Without the help of antioxidants, the skin would dry and wrinkle. Luckily, you can replenish your supply of antioxidants by eating more fruit and vegetables. *Sweet potatoes*, *tomatoes* and *cantaloupe* are especially high in antioxidants and a delicious addition to your daily menu.

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GREEN TEA contains a very potent antioxidant known as EGCG (epigallocatechin-3-gallate). EGCG does many great things for the skin, such as decreasing the inflammation that contributes to acne and sun-related skin aging. It also helps to prevent skin cancer by diminishing the effects of tumor cells. EGCG is found in true teas (not herbal) such as green, black and white. Green tea also contains L-theanine, an amino acid that decreases the production of stress hormones such as cortisol. By doing this, collagen fibers remain intact and wrinkling is decreased. Brew a full teapot daily and sip 4-6 cups throughout the day for maximum benefits.

OMEGA 3 FATTY ACIDS decrease inflammation, the direct cause of aging skin. They can also protect against sunburn by enhancing the effects of your sunscreen's SPF. Omega 3's anti-inflammatory effect improves acne, psoriasis and eczema, too. Cold-water fish such as *salmon, trout, mackerel* and *tuna* are great sources of Omega 3 fatty acids as they provide the protein required to build and repair skin cells. The protein in fish works to improve cell turnover and repair and improves the moisture and appearance of the skin. Two to four grams a day will keep your entire body, not only your skin, young and healthy.

The skin, being our largest organ, is only as healthy as the body it protects. Here are some more important anti-aging nutrients:

BETA CAROTENE has been shown to decrease cancer risk and is found in deeply colored fruits and vegetables. Look for orange and red, dark green, purple and blue when shopping for produce. *Sweet potatoes, carrots, winter squash, apricots* and *cantaloupe* are high in beta-carotene.

PHYTONUTRIENTS are plant-derived nutrients that are important in disease and cancer prevention. The purple, blue and red fruits contain healthy doses of phytonutrients. Blueberries have very potent antioxidant capabilities and are well known to the health and beauty industry. *Red grapes* and *blueberries* contain resveratrol, which reduces heart disease risk. Additionally, *blueberries, strawberries* and *raspberries* contain ellagic acid responsible for scavenging free radicals and preventing DNA damage. Four to five servings a day of fruits and vegetables are the minimum recommended by the FDA to prevent disease. More than that is essential if the goal is to improve health and beauty.

CALCIUM is important for strong bones and teeth. It slows the rate of bone loss in osteoporosis. Calcium is also important for muscle contraction and nerve function. Dairy

foods and dark greens such as *kale, broccoli, bok choy* and others are high in calcium. *Sardine, anchovy, and salmon bones* can be a source of calcium for those sensitive to dairy. The recommended daily dose of calcium is 1500mg for menopausal women and 1000mg a day for all others.

VITAMIN D is also critical for healthy bones. It aids in the process of bone mineralization and helps absorb calcium. Vitamin D is produced in the skin cells when exposed to sunlight. Excellent food sources of Vitamin D include *milk* fortified with vitamin D, *egg yolks, butter* and fatty fish like *salmon*. The minimum daily dose of Vitamin D is 400IU. Make sure it is in your calcium supplement if you do not regularly consume these foods.

B VITAMINS are important for energy production. They include: thiamin (B1), riboflavin (B2), niacin, pyridoxine (B6), folic acid and cobalamin (B12). Thiamin is found in whole grains. Riboflavin is found in *dairy products, enriched grains, eggs, meat* and *leafy green vegetables*. Niacin produces energy by participating in the metabolism of fat and sugar; it is found in *poultry, fish* and *beef* as well as *peanut butter, legumes* and other enriched and fortified foods. Vitamin B6, important in helping the body make protein, is found in foods like *chicken, fish, whole grains, nuts, legumes* and *leafy green vegetables*. Folic acid is important in preventing neural tube defects and cardiovascular disease. You get folic acid by eating *leafy green vegetables, oranges* and *wheat germ*. Vitamin B12 helps metabolize protein and fat for energy and is found in protein-rich foods such as *meat, fish, eggs* and *fortified cereals*. Our ability to absorb B12 decreases as we age; supplementing B vitamins is recommended as we get older and can be a great energy booster.

IRON is an important mineral that helps deliver oxygen to the cells. A lack of iron can result in a kind of anemia that makes you feel tired. The iron found in animal foods such as *meat, poultry* and *fish* is easier to absorb than the iron in plant foods such as *legumes* and *dark green vegetables*. Eating something high in Vitamin C along with the plant foods (such as *orange juice, potatoes, tomatoes* or *broccoli*) will improve iron absorption.

MAGNESIUM is a very important mineral. It is involved in over 300 different enzyme reactions that power the cells of our muscles and nerves. It provides structure to bones and teeth and regulates blood pressure and heart rhythm. Many people don't get enough magnesium in their daily diet. You can get good quantities in *legumes, nuts, whole grains* and *green vegetables*. ■

