



Eat Your Way To BETTER SKIN

Enjoy these five easy food fixes and you'll have your most beautiful complexion ever



BY **SALLY WADYKA**

t | he path to beautiful skin just might be through your stomach. “When the body is out of balance, one of the first places it reveals itself is the skin,” says Ruthie Harper, MD, a board-certified internist in Austin, TX, who specializes in nutritional medicine. “If you’re not getting the right nutrients, skin gets cheated out of what it needs for optimal health and beauty.” Learn to make the most of your body’s



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skin-stomach connection with these five food fixes that give you a healthy, glowing complexion while warding off a host of skin conditions.

Power Up With Probiotics

When the stomach's natural flora gets out of whack because of stress, infection, or a course of antibiotics, you may experience digestive ills and skin problems such as acne, psoriasis, and eczema, as well as dullness and wrinkles. "If your gut's bacteria balance is unfavorable, the toxic bacteria can leak through microscopic holes in the wall of your gastrointestinal tract and travel throughout your body, including to your skin, causing inflammation that prevents the skin from functioning properly," says Frank Lipman, MD, an integrative physician and director of Eleven Eleven Wellness Center in New York City.

To prevent problems, keep your digestive tract populated with good bacteria, which "coat the lining of your gut and help seal it so unwanted substances can no longer leak out and cause irritation," says Whitney Bowe, MD, assistant medical director of cosmetic and laser services at Advanced Dermatology in Ossining, NY. How do you get the good bacteria? The best way is to take a probiotic supplement (available at most health-food stores) or consume fermented foods such as kefir, yogurt, buttermilk, miso, kimchi, and sauerkraut. You should also eat foods that contain prebiotics,



which are undigestible nutrients that stimulate the growth of good bacteria in your gut. Sources include whole grains, bananas, onions, and garlic.

Sprinkle On Super Seeds

The healthy fats known as omega-3s are like manna from heaven for dry skin. Not only are they anti-inflammatory, but they also moisturize skin so it stays soft and supple and fine lines are less noticeable. Research shows that eating more omega-3-rich foods may even help protect against sun damage and skin cancer. Salmon, sardines, and mackerel are omega-3 powerhouses. For those who prefer not to eat fish, flaxseed and chia seeds offer a great alternative. "Just 1 ground tablespoon of these seeds has six times the recommended daily amount of omega-3s," Dr. Harper says. Try them

sprinkled on salads, blended in smoothies, and as a crunchy topping for oatmeal.

Pick Purple Produce

Free radicals—molecules with unpaired electrons that are produced when skin is exposed to UV rays or environmental pollutants, such as carbon monoxide or cigarette smoke—set off a chain reaction

that can damage virtually any molecule in the body, including the important cellular structures in the skin.

One of the best ways to neutralize free radicals is eating foods that pack an antioxidant punch, such as berries, beans, and leafy greens. Purple, however, is the power color when it comes to your looks. “Purple potatoes, purple cabbage, purple

GET PRETTY WITH PROBIOTICS

Probiotics improve skin from the inside out, but applying them topically may also be beneficial. “We have good and bad bacteria on our skin, just as we do in our gut,” says Ellen Marmur, MD, an associate professor of dermatology and genetics at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City. “If the balance is off-kilter, it can result in acne or rosacea.”

The right bacteria may also keep skin young. “A study found that probiotics can stimulate skin’s protective mechanism from the inside, and this may also happen with external application,” cosmetic scientist Eric Perrier says.

The products here treat skin with probiotics like *Lactobacillus*. —Katie Becker

SMOOTH DRY SKIN: Burt’s Bees Intense Hydration Night Cream (\$18; drugstores)



MINIMIZE REDNESS OR ROSACEA: Clinique Redness Solutions Makeup SPF 15 (\$27; clinique.com)



FIX FINE LINES AND DULLNESS: Nude Miracle Mask (\$48; sephora.com)




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cauliflower, raspberries, and blueberries are all rich in anthocyanins, a type of antioxidant that also helps improve circulation,” Dr. Harper says. “That increased blood flow helps bring skin the nutrients it needs to form new cells, collagen, and elastin.”

Skip The Sugar

More than your waistline suffers when you eat too much sweet stuff. “Sugar is poison for the skin,” Dr. Lipman says. It is another cause of inflammation, and it also leads to glycation, a process that ages skin prematurely. Here’s how: Sugar in your bloodstream binds to proteins and speeds the formation of advanced glycation end products (known as AGEs, coincidentally). “AGEs stimulate enzymes in the skin that start chomping up collagen and elastic tissue,” says Alan Dattner, MD, a holistic dermatologist in New York City. The breakdown of collagen and elastin contributes directly to wrinkles, sagging, and uneven skin tone. No surprise, then, that a recent study in the *Journal of the American Aging Association* found that people with higher blood sugar levels were judged to look older than those with lower blood sugar.

Eliminating sugar—in all its forms—from your diet is the obvious, though somewhat extreme, solution. But even reducing your consumption by limiting it to the sugars contained in fruit, for example, can help, Dr. Dattner says. How you consume sugar is also important. Eating an Oreo a day for a week isn’t as bad as polishing off an entire sleeve at once, because taking in large quantities of sugar at a time throws insulin levels out of whack.



Turmeric and cinnamon reduce skin irritation.

Cook Some Curry

Perk up your meals with inflammation-fighting spices. “Turmeric, also called curcumin, is a staple of many curries and helps reduce skin irritation, as do ginger and cinnamon,” Dr. Harper says. Some spices may also help protect you from sun damage. A recent study reported that turmeric supplementation (oral or topical) increases photo protection in skin. So add these skin-savvy spices to your diet. 