

Gorgeous skin in 30 days

There is mounting evidence that phytonutrients found in fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains, and legumes are among your best beauty aids and most powerful anti-ageing weapons. There are thousands of different phytonutrients and each works in a different way to safeguard your skin from free-radical damage. Oxidative damage actually begins at birth, but when we're young, our bodies are good at fending off free radicals. We have inbuilt antioxidant systems that keep these free radicals in check. As we grow older, a nutrient-poor diet and damage caused by years of exposure to chemical additives, pesticides, pollution, radiation, and other toxic substances take their toll.

We also absorb vitamins and minerals less efficiently as we age. Consequently, antioxidant blood levels decrease, paving the way for ageing. We begin to need help from antioxidant nutrients such as vitamins C and E, the minerals zinc and selenium, and the phytonutrients found in many different fruits and vegetables, which join forces with our bodies' inbuilt antioxidant defence systems. Also, as our skin is our largest exposed organ, it receives the most oxidative abuse. So it's a double whammy: free radical overload and a compromised internal defence force! Both of which put us on the fast track to wrinkles, sagging, age spots, and other signs of premature ageing.

The great news is that, the more phytonutrients you eat in fruit and vegetable form, the stronger your antioxidant protection. It's estimated that just one serving of vegetables has more than 100 different phytonutrients. Therefore, the key to gorgeous skin lies in eating a huge variety of fruits and vegetables, along with healthy fats, complex carbohydrates, and lean protein.

By making these nutrient superstars part of your daily diet, you'll be eating your way toward your best skin yet. So – start eating pretty! Erica Angyal

The Best Beauty Foods from A-Z

Avocados: Beauty boosters

These great little green packages contain something called glutathione – one of your master antioxidants and most powerful detoxifiers. Glutathione-rich avocados actually help cleanse your body of dangerous oxidised fats and neutralise free radicals that can cause cell damage. Avocados are also loaded with phytonutrients, one in abundance called beta-sitosterol, which actually blocks the absorption of cholesterol in your bloodstream. Many people shun avocados for their high fat content, but they contain a healthy dose of monounsaturated fats – a major key to smooth, supple skin. Half of a mature, medium-sized avocado contains about 150 calories and 15g of good monounsaturated fat. Avocados contain more potassium

Biotin boost

Biotin is an essential vitamin for fat synthesis – it's required for the function of the enzyme acetyl co-A-carboxylase, which puts together the building blocks for the production of fat in your body. A biotin deficiency can often show up as skin-related problems, such as seborrhoeic dermatitis. Along with avocados, good sources of biotin include tomatoes, soybeans, whole grains, and egg yolk.

per gram than bananas, and they're a fair-to-good source of beta-carotene, vitamin E, vitamin C, folic acid, and the important skin vitamin biotin.

Beauty dosage: Half an avocado a few times a week.

Berries: Your best wrinkle fighters

Berries are loaded with vitamins, minerals, and powerful phytonutrient antioxidants that can slow down the ageing process. Berries are a fantastic source of polyphenols, a class of phytonutrient antioxidants currently being studied for their anti-ageing power. Blueberries pack three times the antioxidant punch of an orange. And a hefty handful of strawberries has all the antioxidant vitamin C your body requires each day to help reconstruct your collagen, the scaffolding that keeps your skin firm. One cup of strawberries provides over 125 per cent of the RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance) of vitamin C, all for a skinny 45 calories.

Blueberries and blackberries are rich in proanthocyanidins, which are potent, free radical scavengers that guard your collagen and boost its repair. Proanthocyanidins also maintain the strength of your capillary walls (your capillaries are microscopic blood vessels that allow oxygen, hormones, and nutrients to pass from your bloodstream to individual cells, including your skin cells) and in doing so, protect capillaries at your skin's surface.

Beauty dosage: Eat one or more half-

cup servings daily – about 30 berries – for gorgeous skin. Berries are typically treated with lots of pesticides, so wherever possible, go for organic.

Broccoli: Helps keep skin elastic

This sensational skin food packs the highest levels of antioxidant vitamins A and C in any food, as well as skin-cancer fighting chemicals. Vitamin C helps keep your skin elastic and prevents bruising. Vitamin A aids in healing acne from the inside out by boosting resistance to infections. Broccoli also contains isothiocyanates, another powerful group of phytonutrients that enhances the action of your detoxifying enzymes. One large cooked stalk has one and a half times your daily need for vitamin C, 50 per cent of your RDA for vitamin A, a small shot of B vitamins, and iron, calcium, and fibre, all for just 26 calories.

Beauty dosage: A few florets or a large stalk of broccoli every other day.

Carrots: Skin saver extraordinaire

Crunch all you want – carrots are bursting with beta-carotene, which your body turns into skin-smoothing vitamin A, a key to keeping dry, flaky skin at bay. You'll also find beta-carotene in other orange fruits and vegetables, such as apricots and sweet potatoes.

According to Ronald R. Watson, PhD, professor of public health research at Arizona Health Sciences in Tucson, "beta-carotene accumulates in the skin, providing 24-hour protection against sun damage." Carrots are filled with other carotenoids (such as alpha-carotene) that also reduce UV damage to skin tissue, protect against free radical damage, and enhance your skin's integrity through conversion to vitamin A. One carrot has double your RDA for vitamin A, plus it's fibre-rich and virtually fat-free.

Beauty dosage: One carrot per day (juiced, raw, grated, or cooked).

Citrus fruit: Collagen booster

The collagen fibres that give your skin its elasticity can be improved by regular consumption of bioflavonoids and vitamin C, found in sizeable servings of citrus fruits like grapefruit and oranges and in kiwifruit, onions, and capscums. Vitamin C and bioflavonoids



fend off free radicals and help guard your collagen. Scientists estimate that about 30 per cent of the antioxidant activity of fruits and vegetables comes from bioflavonoids that haven't yet been identified! Citrus fruits also contain another powerful group of phytonutrients called the flavones, which bolster your antioxidant defence.

Beauty dosage: Eat one piece of citrus fruit daily.

Dark Green Leafy Vegetables: The all-star antioxidants

Kale (closely followed by spinach) has the highest phytonutrient concentration of all vegetables. These richly coloured leafy greens are packed with phytonutrient antioxidants like lutein and zeaxanthin. Other dark, leafy greens include arugula (rocket), beet greens, chard, collard greens, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, turnip greens, and watercress. Each contains a sizeable serving of zinc. In one Swedish study, acne-prone patients who added a zinc supplement to their

Alcohol and zinc deficiency

Long-term alcohol abuse can promote a zinc-deficient state, most likely because of increase faecal and urinary losses.

Zinc plays a vital role in a variety of enzyme systems in the body, as well as in DNA and RNA production. It also helps to regulate copper levels in the brain, reducing anxiousness and paranoia. A deficiency of zinc can result in anorexia, impaired senses of smell and taste, growth retardation, disorders of the reproductive system, and impaired wound healing and immune function. Pathological changes in the stomach occur due to zinc deficiency as well. Alcohol-related zinc deficiency accelerates the poisoning of cells that come into contact with alcohol by altering the metabolism of fats, carbohydrates, and nutrients. This leads to malabsorption problems and other nutritional deficiencies. Chronic alcohol intake often results in a depressed metabolism caused by zinc deficiency.

diets saw 85 per cent of pimples clear up after three months. Zinc is a must for gorgeous skin, as it helps break down damaged collagen, allowing new collagen to form. Zinc is also vital for normal cell growth. Dark leafies are a great source of iron; iron has the all-important task of transporting oxygen to your skin.

Beauty dosage: Eat two or more 1/2 cup servings of spinach, kale, or other dark, leafy greens per day.

Flax Oil and Flaxseeds: Full of fantastic fatty acids

Flax oil and flaxseeds are an excellent source of the skin-softening omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, as well as carotene and vitamin E, nutrients that feed healthy skin. Your cell's membranes are mainly composed of essential fats and the quality of fats you eat shows directly on your skin's surface. Flax oil keeps the skin soft and supple. Flaxseeds (not the oil) contain a great deal of fibre, and as a bonus, are the most abundant source of lignans, protective phytonutrient compounds called phytoestrogens, which help balance your body's hormones and keep your skin soft and youthful.

Beauty dosage: Two tablespoons of ground-up flaxseeds or one tablespoon of cold-pressed organic flax oil daily.

Garlic: Glow-getter

Make garlic a daily ritual; it contains sulphur compounds that are a must for gorgeous skin and potent phytonutrients that scavenge free radicals. Garlic boosts your immune system and is a powerful antibiotic, plus it's a great detoxifier. When cut, grated, pressed, crushed, or chewed, fresh garlic releases enzymes that in turn trigger a cascade of beneficial chemical reactions

inside your body. All this results in the formation of more than 200 phytonutrient compounds, each of which possesses impressive powers.

Beauty dosage: Go for one clove a day.

Olive Oil: The Greek wrinkle cure!

Dose up on olive oil for smooth, supple skin. Rich in monounsaturated fats and the phytonutrient antioxidant polyphenols, olive oil is a vital part of your daily anti-ageing arsenal. A recent study in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* examined the effects of diet on wrinkles. Researchers compared the diets and skin of people living in sun-exposed areas and found that those with the least wrinkling had high intakes of olive oil, vegetables and legumes.

Beauty dosage: One to two tablespoons of olive oil daily.

Parsley: An underrated skin food

Parsley is a culinary multivitamin. Each little sprig contains loads of nutrients, like beta-carotene, vitamin B12, chlorophyll, calcium, and more vitamin C than citrus fruits. It contains just about all other known nutrients, including the hard-to-get B vitamin folic acid, which is important for pregnant women and those on the contraceptive Pill, whose needs are almost doubled. Folic acid helps keep your skin tone vibrant as it plays a key role in the formation and maturation of red blood cells. In fact, a pale, sallow complexion is one sign of folic acid-deficiency anaemia. A half-cup of parsley delivers your entire daily need for folic acid and offers a sizeable serving of vitamin C. It's also an excellent source of iron. Gram for gram, parsley has 25 times more iron than liver!

Beauty dosage: Think big! A whole bouquet or half bouquet three times a week.

Prunes and plums: Complexion perfection

Prunes, a great source of fibre, have long been recognised as a nutrient-rich fruit with multiple health benefits. According to a recent study from Tufts University in Boston, prunes may also help slow the ageing process. The study ranks the antioxidant value of commonly eaten fruits and vegetables using an analysis called ORAC (Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity). Prunes top the list with more than twice the level of antioxidants than other high-scoring fruits such as blueberries and raisins. In fact, prunes are so powerful that they boost antioxidant levels in your blood by 25 per cent.

ORAC values are higher in dark-coloured fruits and vegetables than lighter-coloured ones; the darker and more intense the colour, the more antioxidant protection they convey. The deep pigments of prunes and plums (along with dark grapes) are brimming with age-defying antioxidants and the phytonutrients carotenoids and polyphenols, both potent antioxidants.

Beauty dosage: Two prunes or plums (when in season) daily. Rinse but don't peel plums, as the skin is high in phytonutrients.

Rockmelon: Foils flakiness

This colourful melon is full of carotene compounds that help reduce the deep-down collagen damage that promotes wrinkles. A great source of beta-carotene (which is converted to vitamin A), rockmelon helps prevent keratonic plugs, the rough patches that can be found on the backs of your arms. Rockmelon is also the dieter's delight! It's extremely low in calories, has almost zero fat, and its flavour is fantastic. One fourth of a medium rockmelon has about 50 calories and provides 80 per cent of the RDA for both vitamins A and C. Rockmelon is higher in vitamins A and C than either honeydew or the winter melons, such as casaba or crenshaw.

Beauty dosage: Eat a few slices of rockmelon at least three times a week.

Finding phytoestrogens

Not a soy fan? Not to worry. There are plenty of ways to add the phytoestrogenic phytonutrients to your diet for their protective benefits.

PHYTONUTRIENT CLASS	SOURCES
ISOFLAVONES	Soybeans, tempeh, tofu, soy milk. (Soy sauce isn't a significant source of isoflavones.)
FLAVANOLS	Onions, lettuce, tomatoes, red wine, green tea.
FLAVONES	Apples, green tea.
FLAVANONES	Citrus peels.
LIGNANS	Flaxseed or flax flour, lentils; small amounts are also found in garlic, squash, and asparagus.

Spirulina: Skin treat

Spirulina is a fresh water, blue-green algae that's an ideal skin and anti-ageing food: It has a concentrated nutrient value, is easily digested, loaded with antioxidants, and is an outstanding concentrated source of useable protein (60-70 per cent protein), B vitamins, including B12, beta-carotene, essential fatty acids, and chlorophyll, all excellent for radiant skin. In fact, spirulina is the richest beta-carotene food source, with a full spectrum of 10 mixed carotenoids that all work synergistically at different sites in your body to enhance your antioxidant protection. Spirulina also helps stabilise blood sugar levels, which decreases the need for those emergency chocolate bars and French fries, which so often lead to problem skin.

Beauty dosage: One teaspoon of powdered spirulina or six to 12 organic spirulina tablets daily. You can add powdered spirulina to juice, water, or your smoothie. Because spirulina is a whole food, it can be taken alone or with meals.

Microwave warning

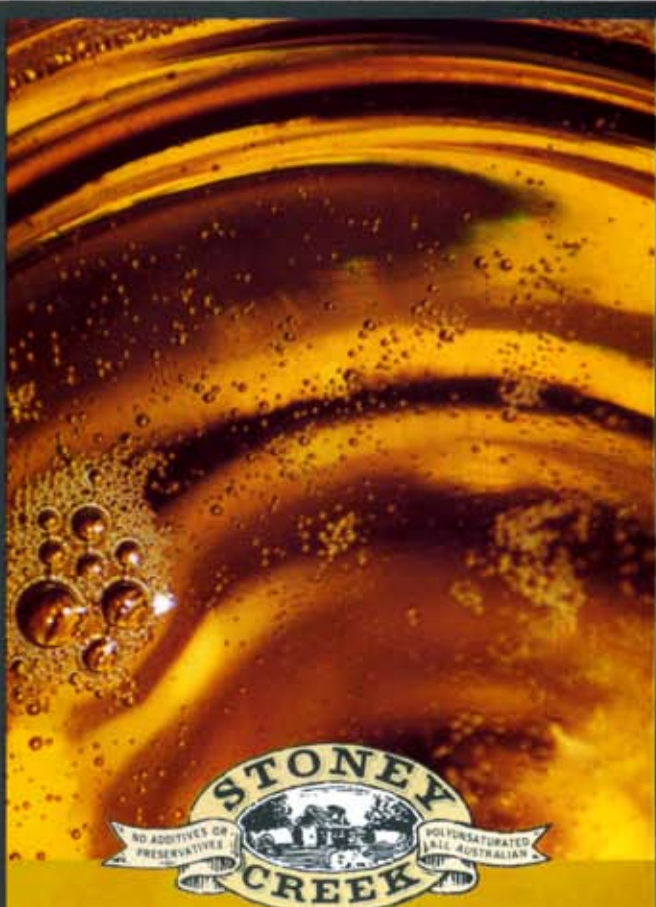
Microwave and you lose out on antioxidants big time. So says a new study published in the *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, which found that microwaved vegetables lose huge amounts of antioxidants. Microwaved broccoli loses between 74 and 97 per cent of its key antioxidant compounds. By stark contrast, steamed broccoli only loses between 0 and 11 per cent of the same antioxidants. This is because most of the bioactive compounds are water soluble and during heating leach to the cooking water, reducing their nutritional benefits. Cook vegetables in the minimum amount of water (as in steaming), in order to retain nutritional benefits, or go for raw.

Tofu: Skin saver

Whether in its original form (edamame) or transformed into tofu, this bean is a skin saver. It's a fantastic food source of phytonutrients; in fact, there are about 300 different phytonutrients in soy alone! The main ones in soy are a group called isoflavones, which include genistein and diadzin. These isoflavones are powerful antioxidants and have a protective phytoestrogenic action. Another soy bonus: It's loaded with vitamin E, which boosts new cell growth and keeps skin moist. Like meat, soy is a complete protein, so it contains all your essential amino acids along with calcium and magnesium. It also has some skin-smoothing omega-3 fatty acids.

Beauty dosage: Eat several servings of soy products a week to get their full benefits. One serving is a cup of soy milk, 90g of tofu, or 1/2 cup of tempeh or miso. ↔

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