

10 Foods That May Improve Your Appearance

Get skin glowing and hair shining the natural way.



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1. Blood oranges, cherries and blueberries

Collagen is a natural protein in your skin and muscles that provides resiliency, shape and texture. Unfortunately, collagen production decreases with age— but you can fight back with dark fruit. "Blood oranges, cherries and blueberries are full of antioxidants, which decrease aging and disease by lowering inflammation. Antioxidants also increase collagen production and thicken the skin, making you look younger and healthier," says Julia Tatum Hunter, M.D., of Skin Fitness Plus in Beverly Hills. "Antioxidants also decrease [the severity of] rosacea." Blackberries, raspberries, plums, pomegranates, cranberries, Asian dragon fruit and kiwis also contain antioxidants.

By Laurie Pawlik-Kienlen for MSN Health & Fitness



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2. Shellfish, sunflower seeds and sardines

These foods may not taste great together, but individually they offer a powerhouse of essential fatty acids. Steven Chang, M.D., staff physician for RightHealth.com, says fatty acids nourish the skin, help maintain skin integrity and keep skin cells performing optimally. "Essential fatty acids, a component of all cell membranes in the body, regulate the flow of nutrients, waste materials, and water in and out of cells—which keeps you looking young." Flax seeds, tuna, walnuts, canola oil, soybean oil and pumpkin seeds are more good sources of essential fatty acids.



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3. Dandelion, turnip and mustard greens

"Foods that keep our livers cleansed of toxins, heavy metals and fats make our whole body function more efficiently," says Dr. Hunter. "This makes us happier, which affects how we look. Plus, a healthy liver brightens our eyes and tightens our skin." She recommends dense green foods such as broccoli, spinach and arugula—as well as turnip, mustard and dandelion greens. Eating these slightly bitter greens has been shown to lessen your sweet tooth. Hunter warns: "Simple and refined sugars, high-glycemic carbohydrates, and refined, manufactured foods age us." Excess sugar has been linked to a process called glycation, in which sugar molecules bond to protein molecules, which has been linked to sagging, wrinkled skin.



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4. Oregano, thyme and parsley

"If you have puffy bags under your eyes in the morning, you are almost certainly consuming much more salt than you need," says Doris Day, M.D., author of *Forget the Facelift: Turn Back the Clock with a Revolutionary Program for Ageless Skin* (Avery, 2005). "Another problem is alcohol: It dehydrates you and can make your skin sag. The worst combination is alcohol and salt, which causes puffy dark circles under your eyes." Dr. Day recommends reducing your sodium intake to eliminate bloating. Instead of salt, season your meals with herbs and spices such as oregano, thyme, rosemary, parsley and garlic.



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5. Crunchy vegetables

Fresh raw veggies are as good for your grin as they are for your skin! Celery, carrots, string beans and cauliflower contain cellulose, which helps scrub stains from your teeth—giving you a whiter, brighter smile. "Both the cellulose and the [other] fiber in these foods act as abrasives that clean and remove bacteria from teeth," says Mickey Bernstein, M.D., president of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. Crunchy veggies are especially effective for recent discolorations. If you've just consumed blueberries, coffee, mustard, red wine or cranberry juice, follow it up with fresh cucumber slices or an apple.



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6. Sea vegetables

"Polluted cells can't function at their optimum level. When our cells are functioning optimally, not only do we have more energy—we look and feel great," says nutritionist Carol Wasserman. "Sea vegetables are one of our richest sources of minerals and phytochemicals." These veggies help detoxify, rebuild and nourish all the cells in our body. Unhealthy foods, stress and environmental pollutants cause cells to age prematurely, potentially leading to thinning hair and premature wrinkles. "Sea vegetables reverse this process," says Wasserman. "For example, spirulina is a 'detox powerhouse.' Hijiki, kelp, arame, wakame, and dulse also work wonders."



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7. Meat, cheese and lentils

It may take 10 pounds of milk to make a pound of cheese, but fortunately you don't need to eat that much dairy or protein to repair your cells. As you age, your hair and skin cells become damaged, making you appear older. The protein in meat, chicken, low-fat cheese, cottage cheese, and certain vegetables promotes cell growth and repair, which translates to younger-looking skin, fewer wrinkles, less hair loss and a glossy mane. To take a break from meat or dairy, try soybeans and lentils instead (they contain more protein than any other legume).



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8. Egg yolks, organ meats and whole-milk products

Dr. Chang says, "Vitamin A is especially important for skin repair, and decreased levels can lead to dry, flaky skin." Dr. Day adds that a lack of vitamin A may cause your skin to heal poorly and wrinkle easily. The main sources of this vitamin are foods from animals, such as liver, eggs and whole-milk dairy products. Some plants—carrots and broccoli, for example—supply beta-carotene, which your body converts to vitamin A as needed. Apricots, nectarines, plums and cantaloupe are more great sources of beta-carotene.



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9. Almond or hemp "milk"

Almond milk is a nutritious dairy alternative because of its high levels of magnesium, potassium, manganese, copper, vitamin E, selenium and calcium. Licensed medical esthetician Tina Seitz says, "Hemp milk is a delicious, nutty-tasting non-dairy beverage that provides essential balanced nutrition. It's a fantastic alternative to soymilk or dairy, and has a natural well-balanced ratio of omega-3 and omega-6 essential fatty acids to keep your mind sharp, your immune system strong and your skin glowing." Both almond and hemp milks are plant-based, and don't contain lactose. They offer high-quality protein that can give hair a radiant, healthy shine and helps keep skin soft.



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10. Wild salmon with avocado and mango dressing

This is more than a delicious meal—it's an anti-aging feast! Stephen Sinatra, M.D., of the University of Connecticut School of Medicine says, "Wild Alaskan salmon has precious omega-3 essential fatty acids, which enhance blood flow. The pink/orange color of wild salmon is an anti-aging carotenoid called astaxanthin that protects cell membranes." Salmon also contains dimethylaminoethanol (DMAE), which improves facial muscle tone and reduces wrinkles. Add avocado for its antioxidant properties and mango (for vitamin E and anti-inflammatory carotenoids) and you'll be sitting pretty after dinner!

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