



# SKIN FOODS

**B**lood vessels under the surface of the skin supply many nutrients to maintain the health of our skin. A healthy diet can help to provide many essential nutrients that play a role in improving the overall integrity, texture and look of our skin, and speeding up recovery from acne or other skin conditions!

Free radicals in our body cause oxidation, which damage cells in our body, including skin cells. They are generated during energy production and from exposure to UV-containing sun rays, environmental pollutants, and cigarette smoking.

Antioxidants slow or prevent this process by absorbing free radicals that accumulate in our body. On top of their anti-oxidative properties, these vitamins and minerals also play crucial roles in our body that will contribute not just to the quality of our skin, but our health! Here are some important antioxidants and their properties:

- Vitamin A aids cell growth and differentiation, which is important for the continuous development of healthy skin cells that are constantly shed.
- Vitamin C is essential for the synthesis of collagen, which is part of connective tissue and is crucial for wound healing. Vitamin C also helps with regeneration of vitamin E.
- Vitamin E boosts the immune system and the health of our blood vessels, allowing for essential nutrients to be carried to our skin.
- Selenium is involved in DNA synthesis during skin cell production, ensuring the production of healthy skin cells.
- Zinc, like selenium, is involved in DNA synthesis and cell division of skin cells. It is also important in wound healing and recovery, thus play a role in repairing damaged skin.

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In combination, these antioxidants prevent pre-mature ageing of the skin. This table shows food sources rich in these nutrients:

Nutrient	Food Sources
Vitamin A	Sweet potato, spinach, carrots, pumpkin, cantaloupe, red peppers, mangoes, apricots, broccoli
Vitamin C	Red peppers, orange, grapefruit, kiwi, broccoli, strawberries, Brussels sprouts
Vitamin E	Wheat germ, sunflower seeds, almonds, hazelnuts, peanuts, spinach, broccoli
Selenium	Brazil nuts, fish, beef, poultry, wholegrain products, spinach
Zinc	Oysters, beef, poultry, pork, fortified cereal, yoghurt, beans

In addition to antioxidants, essential fatty acids also contribute to skin health. They consist of polyunsaturated omega-3 and omega-6 fats that are not made by our bodies, and are required in our daily diet. They make up healthy cell membranes that form the skin's natural barrier, creating healthier looking skin that is supple, moist, and less likely to develop inflammatory conditions.

Deep sea fish such as salmon, tuna, sardine and mackerel (tenggiri) are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, and two servings per week are recommended. Vegetarian sources of omega-3 fatty acids include canola oil, flax seeds and chia seeds.

Lastly, because your skin holds plenty of water, dehydration may cause skin to appear dry or wrinkled. Therefore, adequate hydration creates plump and tender skin for a healthy look. Ensure that you drink six to eight glasses of fluid/day. Plain water, iced or warm, should be your first choice of fluids. For variety, moderate amounts of milk, fresh juice, black tea or coffee may be included to meet your daily fluid requirements.

The nutrients you require for healthy skin can simply be obtained by consuming a Healthy Plate at every meal. A varied, balanced diet should be consumed daily, consisting of five to seven servings of whole grains, two servings of fruit, two servings of vegetables, and two to three servings of meat and alternatives a day.