**OPINION**

**Op-Ed: The State of Your Skin Reflects What You Eat**

Stop wasting money on skincare products and spend more on nutrient-rich foods.

As humans, we experience some form of skin imperfection at one point in our lives. In a [survey](https://practicaldermatology.com/news/mederma-survey-skin-insecurities-have-major-impact-on-mental-health) commissioned by Mederma, a brand of topical scar treatment, one-third of its 2,000 participants stated they would give up their phone for a year if it meant they could have perfect skin. Although a flawless complexion is unrealistic and impossible, people continue to fill their medicine cabinets with best-selling skincare products in hopes of transformative results. However, the focus should shift to what is being put inside the body, as healthy skin depends on what you consume, not just what you apply to the surface.

Every year, people attempt to achieve the beauty standard of clear and healthy skin, disregarding the skin's essential role as the body's largest organ. According to Dr. Jameelah Gater, an integrative family medicine physician, [the skin can serve as a window to your health](https://whatsgood.vitaminshoppe.com/things-your-skin-can-tell-you-about-your-health/), providing signs of internal imbalances in digestion, inflammation, hormones, immune function, and blood sugar. When a pimple appears on our face, we associate it with stress and hormones and aim to control it by relying on skincare products that target the concern. However, dehydration and vitamin A deficiency are the main culprits. [According to Dr. Rachael Burns,](https://www.formulate.co/journal/p/dehydrated-skin-acne) dehydrated skin leads to an overproduction of sebum to compensate for the lack of moisture in the skin, causing a backlog of oil. As a result, acne and pimples form.

Unfortunately, many people treat their skin imperfections by relying on products that strip the skin even more of its moisture. In reality, they should be consuming foods rich in vitamin A as the [nutrient plays a vital role](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/vitamin-a-deficiency-symptoms#TOC_TITLE_HDR_2) in preventing and treating skin problems, such as acne. In addition, vitamin A, stored in the liver, is responsible for creating and repairing skin cells, as a deficiency can increase the chances of breakouts and skin conditions.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the recommended daily amount of vitamin A for adult males is 900 micrograms and 700 micrograms for adult females. Although the nutrient is found in meat, dairy, eggs, cantaloupe, and green leafy vegetables, many rely on supplements for quick consumption. However, based on research published in 2019 in the [*Annals of Internal Medicine*](https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M18-2478)*,* vitamins and minerals consumed through foods are more effective and easily absorbed than supplement pills.

Moreover, vitamin A is only one of the many nutrients your body and skin need. According to Dr. Whitney Bowe, a board-certified dermatologist, [failing to integrate probiotics](https://www.byrdie.com/clear-skin-foods) into your diet can result in an unhealthy gut, thus inflaming the skin. Foods high in probiotics include kombucha, pickles, kefir, sauerkraut, and yogurts containing live active cultures. In addition, foods that are rich in antioxidants, essential fatty acids, and vitamins C, D, and E, such as fish, berries, avocadoes, and sweet potatoes, provide the skin with a multitude of benefits, such as the production of collagen and improvement of barrier function and hydration.

Alongside the nutrients you should consume, it is important to note the foods you should avoid. For example, foods with a high-glycemic index (GI), a measurement that ranks the number of carbohydrates in foods, can trigger acne and skin inflammation. The reason is that carbohydrates lead to the accumulation of advanced glycation end products (AGEs), [accelerating the skin's aging process](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3704564/). In addition, once refined carbohydrates are digested, sugar molecules attach to proteins, such as collagen, causing them to disintegrate. High-glycemic foods include potatoes, white rice, sugary drinks, baked goods, and processed foods, to name a few.

Although swapping high-glycemic foods for ones lower in measurement is a better substitution, not all are good. For example, dairy falls under this category as it is low-glycemic but pro-inflammatory. According to the [American Academy of Dermatology Association](https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/acne/causes/diet#:~:text=Cow's%20milk%20may%20lead%20to,have%20been%20linked%20to%20acne.), the growth hormones found in milk can interfere with the body's natural hormonal balance, causing inflammatory skin conditions such as eczema. Fortunately, there are great alternatives to milk, such as soymilk. Based on research by [U.S. Soybean Export Council](https://ussec.org/research-suggests-soy-isoflavones-may-help-promote-skin-health/) (USSEC), soy contains antioxidants associated with maintaining healthy skin and reducing the effects of skin aging.

By becoming more conscious of what you are consuming, an improvement in the state of your skin will be evident. As the body's largest organ, the skin needs to be hydrated and nourished with vitamins and nutrients to perform and look its best. The relationship between food and your skin is more robust than that of skin care; therefore, the health of your skin depends on what you consume, not just what you apply to the surface.

**By Joe Cloyes**

Joe Cloyes is the founder and CEO of Youth to the People, a vegan and cruelty-free skincare brand based in Los Angeles that uses superfood extracts to deliver the skin the nutrients it needs.

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