

Natural Beauty and Skin Care Tips

Written by Dr. Lauren Deville, NMD

Beauty comes from the inside out...in more ways than one.



Sure, genetics are involved, but you've got a very large role to play in deciding which genes get expressed and which ones lay dormant!

Let's start with your **diet** (and as a Naturopathic Medical Doctor, I always start there). Every cell in your body has a life cycle, and when the old ones die, new ones are created. The building blocks for those new cells come from your diet. If you eat primarily synthetic, highly processed, chemically-laden foods, then not only will those chemicals wreak havoc on the inside (causing a whole host of chronic health conditions down the line), but they will eventually show up on the outside too, in the form of obesity, dull, lifeless, and wrinkled skin, blemishes, and dark circles around your eyes, to name just a few. Below are a few basic tips on how to eat to look your best:

- **Stay hydrated.** For most people, that means drinking half your body weight in ounces daily. Lack of moisture is a major culprit in aging skin, dry hair, and poor cellular detoxification.
- **Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits!** These are high in vitamins and minerals (the building blocks your skin and hair need to create healthy cells), and are high in antioxidants, which help to prevent free radical damage associated with sun exposure and aging. They're also free of chemicals and preservatives, unlike processed foods (and aside from pesticides used in farming – to avoid these, make sure you buy the Dirty Dozen organic: <http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/summary/>).
 - To keep your skin healthy, you'll want to get a good amount of foods high in beta carotene, which converts to **Vitamin A** (red, yellow, and orange veggies), **Vitamin C** (citrus fruits, bell peppers, broccoli), **Vitamin E** (nuts, seeds, avocados), and **zinc** (pumpkin seeds, soy beans, whole grains, peas, and mustard greens).
- **Take your Omega 3's and Omega 6's.** The benefits of fish oil are myriad, but the bottom line is that everyone should be taking one (<http://arizonafoothillsmagazine.com/features/health/3520-four-nutritional-supplements-everyone-should-take.html>). If you're a vegetarian, flax seed oil is a good alternative. For many skin conditions, it's also a good idea to add Gamma Linolenic Acid (**GLA**, including Borage Oil and/or Evening Primrose Oil, EPO). As a bonus, EPO is also great for balancing hormones.
- **Consider a good cleanse.** Toxins (from our diet and our chemically-laden environment) are designed to get out through our "primary escape routes". For solid waste, the major escape route is the gut. But a long-term inflammatory diet can set you up for poor enzyme function and an imbalance in gut flora. Poor digestive function can mean that food doesn't get broken down properly, creating even more toxic accumulation that the already overworked liver then has to clean up. The result? Those toxins can't get out through the primary escape route (the gut). So instead they try to get out through the "fire escape"... which is often the skin. There are a number of ways to cleanse, from water or juice fasting to medical foods to a homeopathic detoxification protocol called biotherapeutic drainage. **Your naturopathic doctor can guide you to the protocol that's right for you.**

Next, let's talk about your lifestyle. Your outward appearance will benefit from the same healthy choices that benefit the rest of you!

- **Exercise.** Regular exercise helps to increase blood flow to the surface of the skin and hair, which delivers oxygen and nutrients, eliminates waste, gives a youthful glow, and of course firms and tones muscle. (It'll also make you feel better overall -- and when you feel better, it shows.)
- **Smoking.** In a word: Don't. Smoke is one of the nastiest pro-oxidants out there, meaning it increases cellular aging dramatically. Incidentally smoking is also heavily linked to heart disease and stroke, Alzheimer's Disease, a variety of cancers (including but not limited to lung), and quite a few other common chronic illnesses.
- **Sleep.** Get more of it. Your body repairs and restores itself while you're resting at night. You will minimize those bags under your eyes if you get enough rest, for one, and you'll feel better and have more energy. Chronic sleeplessness or abnormal sleep patterns have also been linked to cancer, heart disease, obesity, insulin resistance and diabetes.
- **Stress.** This one's a little more difficult to quantify, but think of it this way: when you're stressed out, daily living requires more energy, calories, and nutrients than usual, and your body has to prioritize where to allocate its limited resources. As a result, your skin suffers -- just like the rest of you. Here are some natural (and free!) tips on how to deal with stress: <http://www.drlaurendeville.com/articles/stress-management-techniques/>.

Only after we take care of what you put into your body can we start to talk about the products you use on the outside. But before we talk about what you *should* use, let's talk about what you should *avoid*. Like our food, toiletry items are chock-full of chemicals, some of which can be very toxic.

- **Phthalates:** used to make plastics soft and pliable, these are estrogenic chemicals, which are therefore linked to endocrine disruption and certain cancers. As far as beauty products, they're found in body lotions and deodorants... and by the way, they're also found in any soft plastics you regularly use for food storage. Replace soft plastic food storage containers with glass when you can, but above all, don't put soft plastics in the microwave, since heating soft plastics increases the release of phthalates into your food. **Phthalates have been banned in Europe.**
- **Parabens (methyl, propyl, butyl, and ethyl):** these are added to beauty products as preservatives, and are also linked with endocrine disruption and certain cancers. They're found in all kinds of beauty products, from hair styling gels to lotions to all kinds of makeup, and they're usually listed last on the list of ingredients, so look carefully. So far **they've been banned in Japan and Sweden.**
- **Anything ending in "-ethanolamine" (Diethanolamine, triethanolamine, etc):** these are added as emulsifiers and foaming agents, and they are also endocrine disruptors and linked with certain cancers. They're found in shampoo, soap, hairspray, sunscreen, hair dye,

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and a variety of kinds of makeup.

- **Propylene glycol:** these are humectants (help to retain moisture), and they're neurotoxins. They are found in deodorants, body lotions and washes, conditioners, hair gel, creams, and lipsticks. **These have been banned in Europe.**
- **Sodium lauryl sulfate/sodium laureth sulfate:** This is a suspected carcinogen, and has been linked to kidney and liver damage and a variety of skin and neurological conditions. It can be found in toothpaste, shampoo, bath salts, body and shower gels, and it **has been banned in Europe and Central America.**

If you're still reading, congratulations, you've got the sticking power necessary to delay gratification! That's a very important ingredient in the process of beauty from the inside out. Many skin conditions may clear up with just the above recommendations. Your naturopathic doctor can provide a complete protocol for any lingering issues like stubborn acne, rosacea, eczema, psoriasis, sun damage, or other problem skin conditions. But for general advice, here's some good rules to follow.

- **Wash your face twice** at the end of the day – once to get the makeup off and once to clean the skin itself. There are tons of products out there to choose from for all manner of skin types, and some of them are “clean” (i.e. they lack the chemicals above) -- but in general, the fewer the ingredients, the better. For that reason, I prefer to just use a mild soap (Dove is my favorite).
- **Exfoliate daily** with a delicate scrub to remove dead skin cells and stimulate blood flow to the surface. Many store-bought exfoliants include fruit enzymes, which can help fight free radical damage, reducing age spots and fine lines. If you don't have an exfoliant on hand, try a tablespoon of sugar or oatmeal mixed with water, or grapefruit juice to get the benefits of fruit enzymes. (If your skin is dry, be sure not to leave this recipe on too long, since grapefruit juice can be very astringent.)
- **Moisturize**, even if you have oily skin.
 - My favorite moisturizer is pure jojoba oil – it has no added ingredients, and it's very close to the oil your skin naturally produces. You can even use it on your hair for added shine – just make sure you start at the ends and work up, and use it sparingly. You can get jojoba oil for under \$10 at most health food stores.
 - Aging skin may benefit from a cream including Vitamin C – not only does topical Vitamin C function as an antioxidant, but it's also necessary for the production of collagen, which is lost during the aging process.
 - Alpha hydroxy acids (AHA, including glycolic and lactic acids) are exfoliants that stimulate cell turnover, induce the production of collagen and elastin, and decrease the appearance of sun and age spots. Make sure the product you choose contains AHA rather than beta hydroxy acids (BHA) which are less effective for anti-aging purposes. However, beware that too much AHA can increase the skin's sensitivity to the sun. Choose a product with 5-8% AHA with a pH of 3-4; any more than this can damage the skin.
- **Choose a zinc- or a titanium dioxide-based sunscreen.** Unlike many other sunscreens which rely on chemical means to block UV rays, these block the sun's rays physically – overall a healthier choice. Apply half an hour before going outside and then reapply every two hours. (I hope it goes without saying that you need to read the ingredient list and make sure the sunscreen you choose is clean!) Sunscreen is still one of the best choices you can make to protect your skin against aging.
- **Makeup:** even if it doesn't clog pores, makeup is typically full of harsh chemicals, and years of makeup can exacerbate wrinkled skin. I'm sure we all agree that less is more, but if you must wear makeup, the best choice I've found is mineral makeup. Ingredients include mica, titanium dioxide, zinc, and iron oxides, and because of this, mineral makeup claims to actually be good for your skin. I don't know about that one way or the other, but at least it does not contain any harmful ingredients nor any preservatives.

I've saved the most important tip for last, and that is this: beauty truly does come from the *inside* out. **Visualize the results you want to have.** Picture yourself with a slimmer, more toned physique, with clearer skin, with healthier hair – envision your best you. Be realistic, but keep the image of what you want clear in your mind, and you will discover far more motivation than you previously thought possible. And along the way, **be kind to yourself!** Congratulate yourself for the improvements you have made, and be confident in the beauty you already have. If you see yourself as beautiful, others will too. Guaranteed.



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