

## HEALTH CARE

# Modern skin care: Antioxidants

## How your daily diet can improve the quality of your skin.

BY SUSAN DAVOODIFAR, MD

We are all striving to look and feel our best, and skin care is the very foundation of a youthful appearance. However, few people know the facts about skin care and do not utilize the necessary procedures to maintain their skin.

Modern skin care has evolved rapidly and dramatically over the last few years and many new factors are found to be beneficial to the health of your skin.

One of the newest discoveries in skin care is the influence of diet on your skin, especially the benefits of antioxidant intake. Antioxidants positively support the texture and quality of your skin by reversing the effects of sun damage.

### The Problem: Oxidative Stress

Oxidation is the process by which cells burn oxygen for energy. During this natural process, free radicals are released. UV rays from the sun, smoking and environmental pollution can cause an increase in free radical production, overwhelming the body's natural defenses, causing oxidative stress. Oxidative stress damages the cell membranes of your skin, as well as other organs in your body.

To better understand the effects of oxidation, imagine what happens to an apple slice after it is exposed to the air for a few hours. The brown discoloration on the apple slice

is the sign of oxidation.

### The Solution: Anti Oxidation

Consumption of Antioxidants is essential to support your body's defense mechanisms against oxidative stress. The American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association recommend a daily consumption of fruits, vegetables and grains that are rich in antioxidants, such as vitamins C, E and Caratenoids.

#### Vitamin C

Because Vitamin C is the most common antioxidant found in the skin, this vitamin is important to take to both repair damage caused by free radicals and to prevent them from causing cancer or accelerating the aging process. Vitamin C has also been shown to stimulate collagen production when applied to the skin. Dietary sources of vitamin C include: citrus fruits and juices, green peppers, cabbage, spinach, broccoli, kale, cantaloupe, kiwi, and berries.

#### Vitamin E

Laboratory studies presented at the February 2005 American Academy of Dermatology show that dietary sources of vitamin E can reduce damage caused by sun exposure. Dietary sources of Vitamin E include whole grains, seeds, nuts, vegetable and fish oils, green leafy vegetables, fortified cereals and apricots.

#### Selenium

Selenium is a mineral that

helps protect the body from cancers, including skin cancer caused by ultraviolet rays from the sun. This mineral also preserves the skin's elasticity. Dietary sources of selenium include whole grain cereals, eggs, garlic and seafood.

#### Caratenoids

Lycopene is a pigment that gives vegetables and foods, such as tomatoes, pink grapefruit and watermelon, their vibrant color. Lycopene is one of the most potent antioxidants, and is three times better absorbed by the body when consumed as processed tomato products, rather than as fresh tomatoes. Spaghetti sauce, tomato juice, ketchup and pizza sauce provide over 80% of the Lycopene consumed in the U.S. Beta-carotene, found in abun-

dance in carrots, is the precursor of Vitamin A. It is also found in liver, egg yolks, milk, butter, spinach, squash, broccoli, yams, tomato, cantaloupe, peaches and grains.

It is important to understand that youthful appearance often comes down to choice. A healthy, well-balanced lifestyle can contribute dramatically to the quality of your skin at any age. To help you look your best, ask your cosmetic dermatologist for the perfect combination of preventative measures and dermatological treatments to prevent and reverse the signs of aging. Before changing your diet, please consult your doctor for possible complications with any other conditions you may have. **tw**

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