

The Dry Skin Diet

If you have dry skin, you can end up spending a lot of money on good quality moisturizers and products to treat it topically. Did you know that a few changes to your diet can also help to alleviate dry, itchy and scaly skin?

Fatty Acids Keep Your Skin Plumped

Fat – it's a no-no in some of our diets but it really shouldn't be. One of the most vital parts of our skin's natural barrier is lipids, including, free fatty acids, cholesterol, and ceramides, which means that skin without enough fat resembles a mass of badly arranged protein blocks that doesn't quite have enough glue to hold it together. Water can escape easily which means that your skin will become easily dehydrated.

You need fatty acids in your diet to create the 'glue' that holds everything together under your skin surface – these are the omega-3s found in oily fish like salmon, herring and mackerel; eggs, grass fed beef and flaxseed oils. Omega 6s are commonly found in evening primrose oil and borage seed oil.

Several studies have pointed to the benefits of fatty acids in the diet; in one study of 50 people with atopic dermatitis, 96 per cent of study participants who were given an evening primrose oil supplement reported less itching and dryness after five months.

Vitamins and Minerals that Soothe Dry Skin

Vitamins and minerals are essential for most of our bodily functions and repairs; skin is no exception.

Vitamin C is needed for production of collagen – it produces an enzyme that causes collagen to form. Other trace elements like zinc and copper help to make the collagen denser and work together with vitamin C to keep your skin hydrated. You can get them from a good multivitamin or look for foods containing vitamin C (bell peppers, oranges and tomatoes) zinc (seafood, pumpkin seeds and spinach) and copper (beef liver, lentils and almonds.)

Caffeine, Water and Alcohol

It's very unlikely that drinking the occasional coffee will dehydrate you, but it has been shown that caffeine constricts the small blood vessels, which means less of the good stuff is getting through to your skin.

Alcohol is also a diuretic and well known to be a dehydrator, but as with caffeine you'd have to be drinking a lot more of it than a couple of glasses of wine or beer with dinner to really feel or see the effects.

There's also a myth that drinking lots of water is the key to well-hydrated skin – although it sounds obvious, it's not actually the case at all. Water that we take in is processed internally, and we'd need to be extremely dehydrated to notice the effects on our skin. The outer layer of the skin is the most important area for skincare, and it's this area that needs to be fortified with the right hydrating and moisture-retaining foods.

If you're already eating a balanced diet, not cutting out all the fat and eating a good range of fruits, vegetables and healthy foods, you shouldn't need to use a multivitamin or supplement to improve the condition of your skin. Up your vitamin-rich foods, include some oily fish and fats and make sure that you enjoy a varied diet and your dry skin will thank you for it.