

Which skincare supplements will work for you?

There's an abundance of skin-boosting vitamins and minerals in the food we eat – but we don't always eat enough of them to make a difference. That's where vitamin and mineral supplements can be a real bonus. Here are a few ideas for natural skincare supplements you might like to try for overall skin health – and specific problems.

For healthy skin, hair and nails

Primrose oil and/or blackcurrant oil contain lots of gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), a fat that helps promote healthy skin, hair, and nails. It can be really hard to get enough of this naturally occurring fatty acid just through diet so if your skin is suffering, supplement with one of these two and you should start to see a difference in six to eight weeks.

To keep your skin looking younger

There are high levels of vitamin C in the inner and outer layers of your skin, and it has a big role to play in the production of collagen, which is essential for healthy looking skin. Higher levels of collagen keep your skin looking youthful and feeling more supple and elastic, so that's why many skincare supplements feature vitamin C – and it's an ingredient in many antiaging skin care products.

To reduce dark circles and age spots

Vitamin K helps in the blood clotting process, and also helps your body to heal bruises and other wounds. For this reason, vitamin K is excellent for helping to reduce the signs of:

- spider veins
- scars
- dark spots
- dark circles

It's not widely available as a nutritional supplement but you can find it in some topical creams and preparations.

For stronger nails

Omega-3 fatty acids are essential for healthy skin and nails, so if your nails are looking a little sorry for themselves, and you don't have the time for a diet overhaul, you could try supplementing with fish oils – look for a daily supplement with 2 to 3 g of fish oil. A daily 2.5 mg dose of biotin, which is a B vitamin, can also help stop nails from breaking. Research shows daily supplementation can increase nail thickness by 25 per cent.

For sun protection

Most health advice in recent years has centered on the idea that sunlight is bad for us and we need to protect ourselves from it at all

costs. Although we do need to be careful in the sun and make sure we wear protective sunscreen when exposed to sunlight, we still need to get enough vitamin D – and we can only make enough of this essential vitamin if we get sun exposure!

Vitamin D is one of the best vitamins for your skin and readily available in supplement form. It's even prescribed in some countries for Seasonal Affective Disorder, a condition brought on by lack of sunlight in the winter months. As for sunscreen – Enhance the effects of your topically applied sunscreens by adding oral vitamin C to your supplement list. It boosts the effects of sunscreens by decreasing cell damage and helping the healing process.

Ideally, it's best to try to get as many of the vitamins and minerals mentioned from your diet, but that's not always possible or convenient. Try adding in one or two skin-improving supplements and see how you can improve your skin naturally.