

Client: Patrick Holford
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Beauty starts from within

THE SKIN IS A COMPLEX ORGAN – WHICH MEANS EFFECTIVE SKINCARE IS IMPERATIVE. PRODUCTS AND TREATMENTS CAN DO THE JOB ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE INSIDE?

The condition of skin depends on a number of factors, including age, genes, hygiene, circulation, immune system, environment, psychological state and diet.

Apart from providing a container for the rest of the body, skin is involved – through the nerves – in sensing touch, temperature changes and other sensations such as itching and pain. It also regulates body temperature by dilating blood vessels near its surface when the brain signals it to cool down, or by contracting the blood vessels when it needs to retain heat.

In addition, skin absorbs and eliminates various oils and liquids, protects from infection, and produces vitamin D. This diversity of roles gives some insight into the skin's complex nature. It also shows how intricately it works and that how it looks is linked to what is going on internally. In this sense, skin is a barometer of your inner environment.

This is why effective skincare, which aims to keep skin looking good and free from any problems, cannot merely come from the outside. The condition of our skin is very important to our self-image – it is,

after all, the part of us that other people see – as shown by the amount of time and money some people spend on trying to keep it looking youthful.

Most money is, however, spent on topically applied products, and while there is a role for beauty and medical creams, it is crucial to nourish the skin from the inside too, by providing it with essential nutrients and protecting it from external damage.

The ideal intake of supplementary nutrients depends on individual needs, lifestyle, diet and the environment in which you live. Remember though, supplements are just that – an addition to a good diet and healthy lifestyle, not a replacement for one.

Basic supplements for good health and great skin that can benefit everyone, include:

- a good multivitamin and mineral.
- vitamin C (with bioflavonoids).
- an antioxidant blend (containing at least vitamins A, C, E, zinc, selenium and perhaps lipoic acid, glutathione, cysteine, lycopene, extracts of green tea, grape seed, pine bark or bilberry).
- an essential fatty acid supplement (perhaps linseed, fish or evening primrose oil or an oil blend).

Another important supplement is sulphur. Referred to in the Bible as brimstone, it is the fourth most abundant mineral in the body, but sulphur is often forgotten as a crucial element in health, including that of our skin and nails. This vital mineral is a constituent of keratin and collagen – substances in skin, nails and hair – so it's no surprise they improve when people take supplements in the form of MSM (methyl sulfonyl methane).

Along with vitamin C, sulphur is needed for new cell formation and for keeping the bonds between cells pliable. It's also a great detoxifier. MSM has been shown not only to enhance the beauty of skin, nails and hair, but also to help skin healing (ie, after burns or wounds), acne, allergies, arthritis and much more.

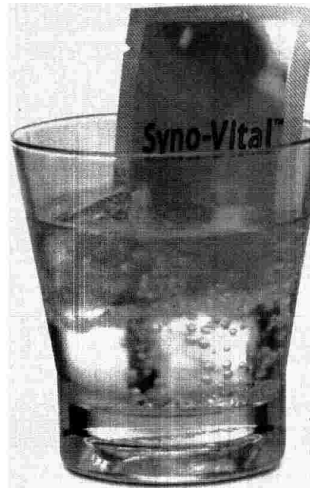
CHOOSING SUPPLEMENTS

As with any product, the quality of supplements varies considerably. Cheaper brands may use a less-absorbable form of nutrients or poorer-quality binders and fillers (or add orange colouring and sweetener to brands of vitamin C). Many companies will declare their products are free of sugar, gluten, yeast, etc, so if you want a particular supplement and are in doubt, either choose a brand that lists all the ingredients or ask the manufacturer to supply a full list.

TAKING SUPPLEMENTS

While some supplements require a specific regime, most vitamins and minerals should be taken with meals (ie, not more than 15 minutes before or after). Take most supplements earlier in the day (ie, with breakfast or lunch) and don't take B vitamins at night if you have difficulty sleeping.

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If you are taking more than one vitamin B complex or C tablet, spread them throughout the day. Because nutrients work in synergy, it's best not to take individual minerals or individual B vitamins unless you are also taking a multi-nutrient supplement. Even then, these individual supplements are best taken under the guidance of a health practitioner.

■ Feature is based on information extracted from *Solve Your Skin Problems* by Natalie Savona and Patrick Holford, widely regarded as Britain's leading nutritional authors. Published by: Piatkus (ISBN 0-7499-2185-4), this guide to overcoming skin problems is packed with practical, easy-to-follow nutritional advice to make skin look great and keep it that way. For more information, visit: www.patrickholford.com ■

