

Could These 7 Everyday Habits Add Years to Your Skin?

Everyday habits may be aging you, says Dr. Erika Schwartz, chief medical officer at the Age Management Institute in New York City. “Many times, we do things every day—or don’t do—often without even thinking, that can make us look older,” she tells *Newsmax Health*.

If you indulge in any of the following six habits, you are causing your skin to wrinkle prematurely:

1. Crash dieting. Crash dieting can cause wrinkles and sagging skin, because as you age, skin has less elasticity and can’t adjust to rapid weight loss. If you need to lose weight, aim for losing no more than one or two pounds a week. And some doctors advise seniors not to be concerned if they gain a pound or two—as long as they’re not overweight—because an extra pound here and there can fill in wrinkles and help you look younger.

2. Multitasking. Multitasking creates stress, and stress releases free radicals that are responsible for aging. A 2012 study in the journal *PLoS ONE* found that just one week of work stress can harm DNA by shortening telomeres, the caps at the ends of DNA strands that protect chromosomes. Shortened telomeres are linked to heart disease, cancer, Type 2 diabetes and other diseases of aging. Stress can also make you more likely to indulge in other behaviors that add years to your face, including grabbing unhealthy snacks.

3. Keeping your home too warm in winter. It’s tempting to ramp up the heat indoors when it’s cold outside, but high temperatures lower humidity. The drying effects can parch your skin, causing wrinkles to be more prominent, and can make you itchy and cause your skin to flake. Use a humidifier to

counteract dry air. Keeping rooms a bit cool can also help convert fat-storing white cells to fat-burning beige fat cells.

4. Munching candy bars. “Your sweet tooth may be adding years to your face,” says Dr. Schwartz. Sugar in the bloodstream forms damaging molecules called advanced glycation end products (AGEs). The more sugar you eat, the more AGEs form and harm the protein fibers that keep your skin firm and elastic. Once damaged, your skin begins to wrinkle and sag, says Dr. Schwartz.

5. Not sleeping enough. “Sleep is crucial,” says Dr. Schwartz. “If you don’t sleep seven to eight hours a night, you don’t give your body time to renew itself, manufacture hormones and keep you from aging. People who sleep are always the ones who look younger than their chronological age.” Try to get 7 to 8 hours a night.

6. Not washing your face every day. If you don’t, you’re making yourself look older, says Dr. Schwartz. “Wash with an organic cleanser and scrub makeup off your face.” Although moisturizers hydrate skin and help make wrinkles less noticeable, never moisturize on top of a dirty face. “If you do, you’ll clog your pores and wind up with pimples and other skin problems that can make you look older.”

7. Smoking. You should already know this, but in addition to shortening your life, smoking can age your skin prematurely, and the more you smoke, the more wrinkling you’re likely to have. It’s not only your face, says the Mayo Clinic. Smoking, which narrows blood vessels and impedes blood flow to the skin, also increases wrinkling on other parts of your body, including your inner arms.

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