

How to Overcome the Obvious Signs of Aging

Wrinkles and gray hair are the two signs that most frequently cause a person to say to himself or herself in the mirror: "Wow, I'm getting old!"

Much can be done to assist your skin, which includes your hair—and in assisting your skin and hair, you are going to improve your own attitude toward getting older.

Confronting The Big 3 Skin Enemies

The three biggest enemies of the skin are inadequate water intake, too much sun, and smoking.

Water. Of all the nutrients that can be discussed in relationship to the skin, water is the most important. Healthy skin is always well-hydrated skin!

Your daily diet should include at least eight to ten glasses of pure water. Caffeine and alcohol pull moisture out of your system, so if you insist on drinking caffeine or alcohol, be sure to add two cups of water a day for every cup of caffeine or alcoholic beverage you consume.

Sun. Regular exposure to ultraviolet rays erodes the elastic tissues in the skin, causing a person to wrinkle prematurely. Ultraviolet energy also produces free-radicals that are stored in the fats of the skin-cell membranes. Years of sun exposure may lead to malignant melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer. This type of cancer has risen dramatically in recent decades, as has squamous cell carcinoma, a less fatal but nonetheless serious form of skin cancer.

What about artificial tanning devices, such as tanning beds and sunlamps? Many people use these to enhance their

attractiveness—in fact, a recent survey showed that more than sixty percent of American adults believe they “look better” if they have a tan. I must admit, living in Florida and being outdoors a great deal, I would find it very difficult not to get a tan.

What most people don't realize is that tanning devices emit ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which browns the skin but also may lead to skin cancer. A recent study involving skin cancer patients found that the use of ANY tanning device was linked to an increased risk for squamous cell carcinoma and basal cell carcinoma, two types of skin cancer. The risk was two and half times greater for developing squamous cell carcinoma cancer if a person used a tanning device, and one and a half times greater for developing basal cell carcinoma.

Some sunlight is beneficial for good health since it increases vitamin D production in the body. Only fifteen minutes of sunlight per day on the face and arms is usually enough, however, for health benefits. This exposure should be in early morning or later in the day to avoid the direct “burning” rays—and even for this time in the sun, sun block is recommended.¹

Smoking. People who smoke a pack and a half of cigarettes a day wrinkle about ten years sooner than a non-smoker! One cigarette destroys about 25 mg of vitamin C, which is a vitally important nutrient for building collagen.²

If you smoke and haven't been able to quit yet, be sure to load up on the antioxidants, especially vitamin C. In addition, free-radical damage occurs any time a person is exposed to environmental pollution, alcohol, and drugs. If you live in an area known for air pollution, or take medications routinely...add extra antioxidant protection to your diet!

Even if you don't smoke, limit your exposure to people who do.

Other Key Factors Related to Aging

In addition to the “big three” factors above, these factors can also cause skin to age at an accelerated rate:

1. Environmental toxins
2. A diet lacking vitamins A, C, E, and folic acid—yet high in fat and salt
3. Excess alcohol consumption
4. Stress
5. Sleep deprivation
6. Harsh soaps or detergent-based moisturizers

Each of these factors, you will note, are ones that are subject to control on your part!

The Overall Aging Process of Skin

There are seven things that happen to all types of skin as skin ages—either in a normal or “slowed” process, or in an accelerated process owing to the above factors. Skin...

Becomes More Dry. Skin tends to become increasingly dry, beginning significantly after age thirty. The skin’s oil glands simply reduce production.

Has Less “Tone.” Melanocytes begin to burn out during a person’s late thirties or forties. This reduces the skin’s ability to fight sun damage. Uneven pigmentation can also occur.

Is Less Firm. The skin cells known as “fibroblasts” lose their ability to function over the years, resulting in a reduction of collagen and elastin.

Has Diminished Immunity. The skin has Langerhan’s cells, which are receptors for the immune system that register the presence of foreign agents and toxins. As skin ages, the Langerhan’s cells do not function as effectively to give warning signals related to skin irritants.

Is Less Soft and Supple. The dermis and the skin’s fat layer

begin to thin at about age forty, and increasingly so in the fifties. The result is a general sagging of the skin and a loss of the lump, softness associated with youth. The skin eventually begins to appear more fragile.

Has Increased Recovery Time. As a person ages, it takes longer for all cells, including skin cells, to repair damage caused by free radicals.

Has a Loss of Temperature Control. Over time, sweat glands slowly lose their ability to function, which makes it harder for the body to regulate itself and register cold and heat.

So what is it that we might do to help compensate for this normal process? A great deal can be done nutritionally and topically!

Protein and Your Skin

Collagen is the cement-like substance that binds together the cells of the human body. It is called “structural tissue,” and as such, it replaces itself very slowly. The strong white fibers of collagen are actually stronger than steel wire of the same size!

***Dr. Ted Broer**, a university-trained biochemist, exercise physiologist and licensed nutritionist, nearly died of heart disease at the age of 27. He has spent nearly two decades studying the relationships between nutrition, exercise, disease and premature death.*

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