

Superfoods for your skin

Makeup can help you look good for a few hours, but for a glow that endures, add these to your diet

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Superfoods are the latest fad, both here and in the West — one year, quinoa is hailed as the star among foods, the next year, the world falls in love with kale. But, in fact, what we now refer to as superfoods have been around for centuries and your grandparents already appreciated the value of these long before they appeared on the covers of health magazines.

So what does it take to qualify for the 'superfood' label? Loads of nutrients, that's all. And, where can you find these? It's no secret that tomatoes, yogurt, spinach, berries, nuts, eggs, soya, bananas, grapes and sprouts are all packed with vitamins and minerals that will work wonders for your system. Some of the more exotic items that carry the tag are avocados, wheat germ, wheat grass, black beans, kale, broccoli, bok choy and flax seeds. The foods mentioned here are great for your skin and overall well-being. However, if you have only these and nothing else, it might actually create a nutrient deficiency. A healthy and balanced diet is essential for those who aspire to have healthy, glowing complexions.

A number of international dermatology journals have published reports extolling the Indian diet. A diet which comprises dal, rice, vegetables, chapati and ghee (the right fats in your

diet keep the skin elastic as they encourage collagen regeneration) spells good health. So, use the superfoods listed below to complement the benefits of your home-cooked meals and you can look forward to a lifetime of healthy skin.

Here's how these foods help:

Carrot, squash, pumpkin and beetroot:

These are loaded with carotenoids which are precursors of Vitamin A, one of the most powerful antioxidants that you can ingest. This protects your skin from the harmful rays of the sun.

Tomatoes: Lycopene, the wonder antioxidant in these, is more easily absorbed in the body when it is cooked, so it is better to ingest tomatoes in the form of juices or as soups, rather than using it directly on the skin.

Pomegranate: This contains ellagic acid, which has very powerful anti-ageing properties and also shields the skin from the sun.

Avocados: These provide healthy fats and high levels of the vitamins C and E. This translates into well-hydrated skin. Avocados can also be applied topically on dry skin to moisturise it.

Chia seeds: These are a great source of essential fatty acids and they can be consumed in the form of special diet bars or chips etc. Chia seed oil can also be applied as you might a cream or serums as the seeds have anti-inflammatory properties.

Oats: This is the best thing to eat in the morning if you suffer from acne-prone skin, as

oats have a very low Glycaemic Index (GI). Eating lots of high GI foods can elevate hormones that increase the activity of oil glands, contributing to the formation of acne. Besides, the protein content of oats helps to maintain the skin's natural barriers, protecting it against pollution, chemicals and conditions like eczema.

Eggs: Egg whites are a great source of protein, and applied topically, the whites would stimulate collagen production, making for younger looking skin. It's also a great conditioner for the hair.

Salmon: Best consumed in its 'smoked' form, this has all the essential fatty acids required for a glowing complexion.

Yogurt: An extremely good source of probiotics, this, when ingested, helps to soothe the digestive system by controlling the bad bacteria, thus preventing breakouts. It can also be applied on the skin as its lactic acid content works on reducing blemishes and hydrates the skin.

Blueberries, raspberry and strawberry: These are loaded with antioxidants that will lend your skin a healthy glow. For optimal benefits, these berries should be consumed orally. However, there are a variety of creams and applications now available which contain these superfoods.

Lemons: These contain high levels of Vitamin C, which is a very important ingredient in anti-ageing products, but lemons should be consumed orally to take advantage of its skin benefits, never applied topically. Lemons also neutralise the pH value of the body, balancing the effect of a fast-food laden diet which raises the body's acidity, causing dry and inflamed skin and acne.

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