



Nettle for Vitamin A

by
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Ah, winter...if you live far enough north, it's a time of beautiful snow, cozy clothing, warm beverages, and evenings by the fire. This can be a wonderful time of year for many. However, due to the changing weather and often changing diets as well, winter may be not-so-wonderful for our health. The combination of cold, dry conditions and a diminished intake of fresh produce, paired with increased indulgences around the holidays, can lead to *the perfect storm*. This is especially true when it comes to skin health. Complaints such as dry skin, redness, eczema, psoriasis, and acne blemishes often increase in the winter months. Skin issues can affect children and adults alike, and are among the top concerns bringing patients to see their health care providers. Here is a guide to some top skin nutrients to get you through any winter blahs.

Essential nutrients

There are various nutrients that benefit skin health, but the following five are among the biggest powerhouses:

1. Vitamin A
2. Vitamin C
3. Vitamin E
4. Zinc
5. Essential fatty acids

Vitamins A, C, and E work synergistically as antioxidants, compounds that protect from, and terminate the production of, free radicals that can cause cellular damage. As such, they are essential to the maintenance of healthy skin. Free radical damage can occur from exposure to UV rays, car exhaust, pesticides, cigarette smoke, and a wide variety of other sources. Skin is particularly sensitive to free radical damage because it is a very large organ, with a great deal of surface exposure. These vitamins neutralize the oxidation that harms the skin protecting it from blemishes, wrinkles, dryness, aging, and overall inflammation.



Vitamin A

Vitamin A is used by the body for healing and construction of new skin cells. It works to reduce the over-production of sebum (the natural substance that moisturizes, lubricates and protects skin). Vitamin A plays a healing role when it comes to general dry skin, acne, eczema, and other conditions.

Great food sources include: green leafy veggies, yams, squash, sweet potatoes, carrots, dried apricots, eggs, nettle and liver.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C is particularly important for collagen synthesis. Collagen is an essential component of connective tissue, and thus vitamin C plays an important role in wound healing. It's also helpful for dry skin, as well as eczema.

Great food sources include: kiwi, kale, Brussels sprouts, red cabbage, snow peas, broccoli, red peppers, and oranges.

Vitamin E

Vitamin E is particularly useful for damage due to UV light, as it can absorb some of the energy from UV radiation. In addition, it helps vitamin A function properly and is thought to act as a natural anti-inflammatory. And as if that wasn't enough, this vitamin superstar has also been found helpful topically for wound healing and the treatment of scars.

Great food sources include: almonds, sunflower seeds, spinach, avocado, dark leafy greens, and peanuts.

Zinc

Zinc is important for tissue healing, repair and scar tissue healing. It also improves immune response. It, too, is involved in vitamin A function and controlling inflammation. Research has even linked the pathology of eczema to a zinc deficiency.

Great food sources include: oysters, red meat, poultry, shrimp, mushrooms, sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds, chickpeas, and lentils.

Essential fatty acids

Essential fatty acids are important for all skin issues and aid in the prevention of dryness. They work to maintain healthy skin barrier function, and make up the building blocks of healthy skin membranes. Omega-3 and healthy omega-6 fatty acids are particularly important for eczema and psoriasis patients, due to their anti-inflammatory properties.

Great food sources include: salmon, herring, mackerel, sardines, ground flax seeds, walnuts, evening primrose oil, black currant oil, and avocados.

In addition, naturopathic doctors regard the skin as a mirror of one's overall digestive health. It's important to remember that the avoidance of refined sugar, white flour, food additives, processed foods, and known food allergies are also crucial for great skin health. Optimizing digestive function, vitamin D status, and sufficient probiotic intake are also vital to the big picture. And don't forget to remain hydrated! The best skin health cannot be achieved unless we drink adequate water (start with half your body weight (lbs) in ounces every day).

If you're already suffering from poor skin, or you experience worsening skin at this time of year, make the effort to focus on your super skin nutrients starting now! Make sure to check out Dr. Heidi Lescanec's delicious skin healthy recipes for some inspiration. Yum! •



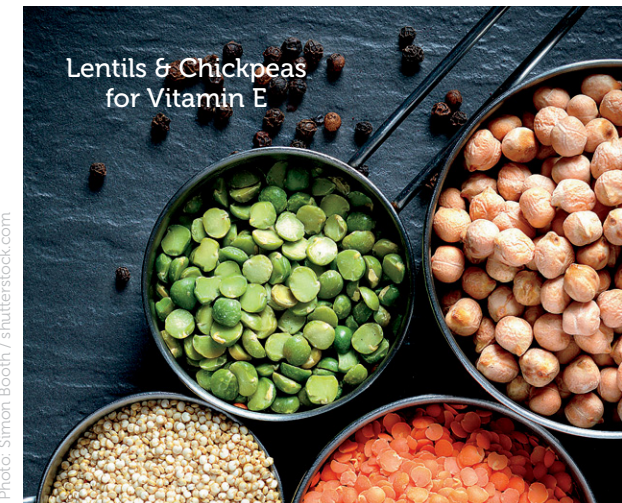
Brussels Sprouts for Vitamin C

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Almonds & Sunflower Seeds for Vitamin E

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Lentils & Chickpeas for Vitamin E

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Avocado for Essential Fatty Acids

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