

# Eat Pretty: 16 Foods for Better Skin, Hair & More

Written by Melissa Larsen

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**You are what you eat. (Did you know kale can diminish under-eye circles, sweet potatoes can make your skin glow and bell peppers can slow down the aging process?) Take advice from the experts, and add these 16 eats to your shopping list pronto for results that are not only good for you but good-looking on you, too.**

## Yogurt

"Yogurt is beneficial for overall wellness, but this probiotic-rich food is especially helpful to the skin," says Dr. Janice Johnston, M.D., medical director and family practice provider at Arrowhead Health Centers. "Your skin and digestive tract happen to be very closely related, so what you put into your stomach may impact the appearance of your skin. Probiotics help to restore a healthy balance of bacteria in the digestive tract, neutralizing toxins and decreasing inflammation. As a result, acne and other skin complaints may disappear."

## Flaxseeds

"Flaxseeds are an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids, which will nourish your hair and prevent dryness and dandruff on the scalp," says Dr. Johnston. "Additionally, flaxseeds are a fantastic source of fiber, which will help your body to absorb vital nutrients. A healthy gut results in good overall health and, of course, healthy hair."

## Kale

"A key nutrient found in kale is vitamin K, which promotes healthy blood clotting," says Dr. Johnston. "When the blood circulating around your eyes clots properly, your dark circles will vanish."

## Bananas

Dr. Johnston says: "The potassium found in bananas does a great job of regulating the sodium levels in your body and, in turn, prevents bloating. Bananas are also a great source of good carbohydrates, which aid in building lean mass."

## Asparagus

"Asparagus has many health benefits, but this antioxidant-packed vegetable is great for slowing down the aging process," says Orangetheory Fitness trainer, Jennifer Ulloa-Grubb. "Asparagus has been known to suppress your appetite, as it is an excellent source of soluble fiber inulin, leaving you feeling full without overeating. A key nutrient also found in asparagus is vitamin K, which acts as a natural diuretic, causing you to de-bloat to look and feel your best."

## Grass-Fed Bison

Ulloa-Grubb says: "Although red meat often has a bad reputation, bison is considered one of the best when it comes to having a high protein-to-fat ratio. Bison is considered to be 'lean' because of its relatively low levels of saturated fat. Bison is a great way to naturally acquire zinc, which is known to boost your immune system and help form new and healthy tissue, hair and skin cells. So if you struggle with completely cutting red meat out of your diet, don't worry. Bison is an excellent source packed with protein, antioxidants and vitamins that will keep you looking and feeling young."

## Sweet Potatoes

"If you're looking for that natural summer glow, you may want to start eating more sweet potatoes," says Ulloa-Grubb. "Sweet potatoes are known as a 'skin superfood' with high levels of the antioxidant carotene, which warms up your natural skin tone. Sweet potatoes are also one of the best sources of the powerful antioxidant, vitamin A, which encourages healthy, glowing skin and collagen growth. Implement sweet potatoes into your regular diet to maintain healthy skin and a sun-kissed glow all winter long."

## Cocoa

"Cocoa contains high levels of flavonols, a powerful antioxidant," says Judy Nicassio, certified nutritionist with [Rejuvena Health & Aesthetics](#). "It can improve your memory, increase your sense of well-being, reduce heart disease, help shed fat, boost immunity and create loads of energy. Applied topically, the caffeine in chocolate may temporarily reduce skin puffiness."

## Walnuts

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"Foods rich in omega-3 essential fatty acids keep the skin soft, smooth, improve its elasticity and prevent dry skin and acne. They help to hold moisture in the skin so it looks 'plumped up,'" says Nicassio. "Walnuts, in particular, also are loaded with copper, which boosts collagen production."

## Green Tea

"Green tea is loaded with antioxidants, but it's epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) that studies are finding has powerful medicinal properties," says Nicassio. "Its many healing effects include improved brain function, increased fat burning, lowered risk of some cancers, improved insulin sensitivity and reduced risk of cardiovascular disease."

## Pomegranates

"Packed with polyphenol antioxidants, pomegranates fight free radicals, regulate skin's blood flow and help smooth lines and moisturize the skin," says Nicassio. "Their anti-inflammatory properties can help to prevent cancer and improve memory and brain function. In addition, the phytochemical in pomegranates also protect against heart disease."

## Sunflower Seeds

Nicassio says: "Chockful of vitamin E, sunflower seeds keep your skin supple by protecting its top layers from the sun. They can also help to treat dry skin areas, such as lips and heels when applied topically."

## Turkey

"Turkey is high in protein, which is a necessary nutrient for hair health and keeps locks long and luscious," says Nicassio. "Protein is critical for building muscle mass, supporting neurological function, aiding in digestion, helping to balance hormones naturally and keeping our mood upbeat."

## Bell Peppers

"Bell peppers are rich in vitamin C, an antioxidant that helps protect your body from free radicals, substances that damage cells," says Nicassio. "Free radical build-up in your body can add to the development of disease and contribute to the aging process. Vitamin C also plays a vital role in controlling infections, healing and developing collagen, a tissue needed for maintaining healthy bones, teeth, gums, skin and blood vessels."

## Pumpkin Seeds

"Pumpkin seeds are high in zinc, an essential trace mineral that plays a role in over 100 enzymatic reactions in the body," says Nicassio. "Zinc is a key part of your skin's dietary defense team. It lessens the formation of damaging free radicals and protects skin's lipids (fats) and fibroblasts—the cells that make collagen, your skin's support structure when it's exposed to UV light, pollution and other skin-agers. Even healthy, intact skin relies on zinc for new cell production and the function of cell membranes."

## Cranberries

Nicassio says: "Cranberries have vitamins C, K and E, and are a good source of manganese and fiber. Their antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds may also protect the brain from age-related memory issues and coordination loss. But take care. These health benefits are for fresh cranberries or unsweetened dried cranberries. Most commercially dried cranberries contain added sugar."