

flick on your ANTI-AGEING SWITCH

Here's everything you need to know about your skin's natural renewal process and how you can boost it – so you can have smoother and younger-looking skin.

By CECILY-ANNA BENNETT

If you could talk to your own skin, what do think it would say? Perhaps, "I'm thirsty – where's the moisturiser?" Or, "More sunscreen, please!" Your skin works hard for you, constantly renewing its cells – and while this process slows with age, there are things we can do to help it along. Try these dermatologist-approved ingredients, cell-boosting treatments and complexion-perfecting foods to turn back the clock. Your skin will thank you.

Fend off fine lines

ANATOMY OF A WRINKLE

Where do crow's feet, forehead furrows and laugh lines come from? The secret to preventing them is to know how they form. First up, the building blocks of healthy, youthful-looking skin are collagen, which gives skin firmness; elastin, responsible for elasticity and 'bounce'; and glycosaminoglycans (known as GAGs), which keep skin hydrated. From the age of 20, we start producing around one per cent less collagen per year; elastin production slows; and our skin thins and becomes more fragile. This 'intrinsic' ageing is inevitable but subtle. However, there is also another type of ageing: 'extrinsic' ageing is the result of environmental and external damage. Think lifestyle habits, UV damage and exposure to pollution. It's these factors that cause collagen and elastin to significantly diminish, resulting in sagging skin and wrinkles, along with brown spots, dryness and uneven skin tone.

What you can do

It's all about prevention – and it's never too late to start. Shield your skin daily with a good SPF 50+ sunscreen, add an antioxidant, such as vitamin C serum, to bolster protection from UV rays and free radicals, plus try the following tricks to power up your collagen stores:

1 REACH FOR RETINOIDS

Retinoids are vitamin A derivatives that include retinol and retinaldehyde (available over the counter) and tretinoin (a prescription medication). Scientifically proven to assist skin cell regulation, retinol is one of the most powerful topicals for preventing early signs of ageing, as well as helping to reduce the appearance of fine lines, wrinkles and discolouration. "Retinoids fight ageing, especially sun-related or photo-ageing, by promoting collagen production and also slowing collagen degradation," says dermatologist Dr Karen Koh, from the Australasian College of Dermatologists.

Try Neutrogena Rapid Wrinkle Repair Retinol Oil, \$42.99, Chemist Warehouse.

2 POP ON PEPTIDES

Studies have found peptides noticeably improve the appearance of aged or photo-damaged skin. "Peptides are composed of amino acids which can imitate the building blocks that make up collagen and elastin," Dr Koh explains. "Some have been shown to stimulate collagen production. These can also assist in preventing or treating fine wrinkles." Try Clear Skincare CP Copper Peptide Serum, \$45, clearskincare.com.au.

3 ZAP WRINKLES WITH LASERS

Laser therapy works by heating the cells that produce collagen (the fibroblasts), thereby speeding up production, and also heating the collagen to 'shrink' it and make it tighter, explains dermal therapist Dr Giulia D'Anna. "This kind of laser is called non-ablative, as there is no removal of skin surface," she explains. "The perfect thing about non-ablative laser is that it works from the inside out. Most people need around three to six treatments to really start to notice a difference, but this does depend upon how many wrinkles you have and also how deep they are." Best suited to people with a fair to medium skin tone, you can expect to pay around \$250 per session.

4 PUT A RAINBOW ON YOUR PLATE

Studies have found that the polyphenols in green tea as well as lutein – a carotenoid in leafy greens, broccoli and peas – can inhibit the natural enzymes that break down collagen. Meanwhile, phytonutrients in orange and yellow fruits and vegetables – oranges, pumpkin, carrots and orange capsicums – help improve skin vibrancy, while antioxidant-rich fruits – such as raspberries and pomegranates – contain ellagic acid, an antioxidant found to reduce collagen breakdown in animal studies. ►

**Fast
fact**

As much as 80 per cent of the damage that makes our skin look older is caused by UV exposure.

Stay sun-spot free

HOW PIGMENTATION HAPPENS

The main culprit is the sun. As UV rays hit your skin, they switch on an enzyme called tyrosinase that lives in your pigment-producing cells. These cells (called melanocytes) kick into action, creating pigment which travels to the top layers of your skin. Once dark spots have taken up residence, they're constantly replaced by new pigment (sort of like a stubborn conveyor belt of sun-spot delivery), which is why fading them is such a tricky task.

What you can do

There are a few effective ingredients and practices you can try to slow down your face's pigment-making factory. Try these to get the best results:

1 USE VITAMIN C

Numerous studies have shown vitamin C (aka ascorbic acid) improves skin texture and tone, boosts collagen production, brightens the complexion, fades dark spots and helps fend off photo-ageing due to sun exposure. "I recommend using this every morning to help reduce the effects of the sun, since vitamin C is a potent anti-oxidant, but it also helps to brighten the skin, too," advises Dr D'Anna. Try **Revision Skincare Vitamin C Lotion 30%**, \$176, envogueskin.com.au.

2 GIVE NIACINAMIDE A GO

Also known as vitamin B3, niacinamide is a water-soluble vitamin that works to help visibly improve the appearance of enlarged pores, uneven skin tone, fine lines and wrinkles.

"It regulates cell metabolism and regeneration and at just five per cent concentration can improve elasticity of the skin, redness and even out pigmentation," Dr Koh says.

3 EXFOLIATE

Pigmentation sits on the top layers of the skin, so a good exfoliating treatment can reduce the appearance of sun spots. You have two options: manual exfoliation, using a scrub or cleansing brush; or chemical exfoliation with AHAs, such as glycolic or lactic acids, which 'eat' away the dead skin cells. But don't over-exfoliate and cause skin sensitivity – give yourself a scrub only once a week.

4 WEAR SUNSCREEN

Slather on the SPF 50+ – even when it's overcast. As much as 80 per cent of the damage to our skin that makes us look older is caused by UV exposure. Even if you don't burn, the rays responsible for ageing cut straight through windows and clouds. The good news is it's never too late to start protecting yourself. Try **La Roche-Posay Anthelios XL Ultra Light Fluid SPF 50+** \$29.99, Priceline.

5 GO HIGH-TECH WITH LASERS

"Hands down, the easiest and most effective option for age spots is IPL (Intense Pulsed Light), which uses light to target the colour brown," says plastic surgeon Dr Anthony Youn. "This destroys the pigment, causing the age spot to turn darker and slough off after about a week." Most people require upwards of four treatments for optimal effect, but it's largely painless and requires no downtime.

Get smooth & soft

HOW ROUGH TEXTURE HAPPENS

When we're young, our skin has strong cells, fatty acids and natural oils that keep everything smooth and hydrated. As we get older and produce less oils, our skin becomes drier. On top of that, the natural shedding of our skin cells slows down, so it's a recipe for a sandpapery complexion absolutely none of us asked for.

What you can do

Simply add back the lost lipids and slough off the dead cells to reinforce the strength of your skin barrier and bring back your youthful glow:

1 LOOK FOR AHAs

Alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs), also known as fruit acids, work by loosening the bonds between the dead skin cells and the fresh new skin underneath. Dr Koh says, "AHAs can be helpful for treating skin dryness, elasticity and pigmentation, stimulating the exfoliation of cells from the top layers of the skin, but also increasing skin regeneration and hydration. The most well-known AHA is glycolic acid." Try **Alpha-H Liquid Gold**, \$59.95, adorebeauty.com.au.

2 GRAB THE RIGHT MOISTURISER

Hydration is essential for skin to look bouncy and fresh. Choose a moisturiser that contains lipids, fats or ceramides to replenish lost moisture and support healthy skin structure. Try **CeraVe Facial Moisturising Lotion**, \$21.99, Chemist Warehouse.

3 GO NUTS

Nuts and seeds contain linoleic acid, which works wonders for dry skin. One study found that a daily dose of half a teaspoon of omega-3-rich flaxseed oil boosted skin hydration by as much as 39 per cent after 12 weeks.



Tighten up

WHY DOES SKIN SAG?

One word: gravity. It's a fact of life that what goes up must eventually come down – and that applies to our skin as well. As our collagen and elastin breaks down, our skin loses plumpness and begins to drop.

What you can do

Our advice? Love the skin you're in – topical products don't do much for this type of skin ageing. But if you feel inclined to tighten and tone, cosmetic injectables and certain treatments can make a difference:

1 FIRM WITH FILLERS

To fill lost volume in your face – especially the folds around the nose and mouth – a dermatologist can inject one of the many different types of hyaluronic acid (HA) filler on the market, like Restylane, which lasts 8-10 months, or Stylage which lasts 12-18 months. "When we inject HA, our skin begins to look younger again because the amount of water naturally held in the skin increases," Dr D'Anna says. "This means that the cells communicate better, carry nutrients to the skin surface better and also lose waste more efficiently." Just make sure

that you go to a trusted therapist. The injectables industry isn't regulated, so you want to be in experienced hands.

2 TURN UP THE HEAT

Non-invasive treatments like Thermage (using radiofrequency) and Ulthera (using ultrasound) use intense heat energy to induce contraction of the skin, tightening its overall appearance. Dr D'Anna says that ultrasound can penetrate deeper than radiofrequency, so technically will give a better result. "Both treatments can become quite intense as the treatment progresses," she says. "It's not uncommon to require heavy painkillers." Ulthera is newer to the market, and some clinics charge up to \$3000 for a full face treatment. "An alternative treatment option is Venus Viva radiofrequency treatment," Dr D'Anna says. "It provides the equivalent of a fractional laser treatment, but also sends radiofrequency heat energy down into the skin, which means we get rid of surface blemishes and wrinkles with the fractionated part of the treatment, but we also tighten the skin deeper down, too." And at around \$650, it's more wallet-friendly. **12**