

Professional BEAUTY

MAR•APR 2016 THE BIBLE OF THE AUSTRALIAN BEAUTY INDUSTRY

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the dark deficiency



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SKIN Superfoods

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Much of the focus in salons is directed towards external physical treatment of skin disorders. It is equally important to appreciate those internal factors that play a role in skin health. These determine baseline skin health, and the body's response to treatments.

As a dermatologist and Mohs surgeon, much of my day is dedicated to detailed patient education regarding the potential benefits and risks of specialised surgical, laser and injectable treatments. That said, at our clinics we also strive to go beyond the usual 'doctor's lecture' that ends with desultory remarks to the effect of '...Oh, and don't forget your sunscreen and a good diet'.

We find it valuable to delve deeper and consider an optimal diet to ensure delivery of vital building blocks to create and sustain healthy skin. For this approach I must thank our head of nursing Melanie De Vincentis, RN, whose deep knowledge and enthusiasm relating to wholistic health and epigenetics has positioned diet and hormonal factors at the centre of much that we do.

So what are the vital ingredients that deliver hefty dividends for skin health and longevity?

Our favourites at Specialist Dermatology Surgery & Laser are: vitamins A, B3, C, E, zinc, Omega 3, resveratrol and probiotics. These should be included in the context of a balanced, healthy diet and lifestyle to achieve inner and outer health.

That said, life is busy, and healthy choices can be time consuming and expensive. Such choices

may seem something of a luxury at times. Many beauty clients will therefore prioritise convenience and choose to source dietary essentials in the form of bottled supplements, potions and pills. The allure of the miracle pill and quick fix is undeniable. I too have been mesmerised by the promise of row upon row of supplements at the beachside local health shop.

These are best resisted for several reasons. Firstly, unless you intend to commit to undying brand loyalty for a lifetime, this course of action is unsustainable, and not that enjoyable. How often do these half-consumed bottles of hope remain tucked away in a forgotten corner of the cupboard?

Furthermore, the cost tends to add up. No single supplement contains everything required to address an individual's needs. Ingesting multiple supplements represents something of a false economy and can even be unsafe.

Careful prior assessment should be undertaken by a doctor to confirm they are genuinely indicated, with subsequent follow-up to ensure effectiveness and to avoid problems relating to incorrect dosage. More is not always better; over-dosage is a potential issue with supplements. For instance, excessive amounts of certain antioxidants can actually raise the risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

An equally important point is that to rely on bottled supplements alone is akin to expecting musical notes in isolation to have the same pleasing effect as the beautiful symphony that arises when they are played together. It is far more beneficial to source essential ingredients in their natural state.

This also caters for the fact that our knowledge at any given time is always incomplete. We will continue to discover new ingredients and actions that make certain foods 'super'. We strongly recommend capturing the benefits through consumption of natural, fresh, whole foods. Supplements can never take the place of a 'real' balanced diet.

Our top Superfoods are:

- **Blueberries** – My favourite superfood. They taste as good as they are! Packed with powerful antioxidants, including vitamin C and resveratrol (the ingredient that accounts for the health benefit of moderate amounts of red wine), these little gems fight oxidative damage to cells from stress and radiation. They slow ageing.
- **Almonds** – a delicious source of antioxidant vitamin E, protein and flavinoids which support heart health.
- **Oats** – a rich source of vitamin B, calcium, magnesium and protein. They

deliver the further benefit of satisfying and 'filling', thereby reducing urges towards unhealthy dietary hits containing high levels of sugar and saturated fats. Other helpful nuts and seeds are sunflower kernels, sesame seeds, millet seeds, chia seeds.

- **Carrots** - deliver a powerful vitamin A punch with every crunch. Vitamin A reduces acne, rosacea, sun damage, skin cancer; and even boosts vision.
- **Sweet potato** - a great source of antioxidant vitamin C and beta-carotene.
- **Salmon and Tuna** - excellent sources of vitamin B3 (niacin) which has powerful actions including reduction of inflammation, rosacea and skin cancer. They also contain selenium, which preserves skin elastin in the face of UV damage, and are a great source of Omega 3 which keeps skin supple and normalises glandular functions. Omega 3 can reduce styes of the eyelids and delivers further benefits through healthy blood flow and cholesterol levels.
- **Spinach** - contains vitamin B and the powerful antioxidants vitamins C and E; Omega 3, calcium, iron, magnesium and folate. Folate contributes to DNA repair. Cartoon characters can be role models!
- **Green Tea** - a divine and relaxing source of powerful antioxidants to fight stress, age and skin cancer. An interesting fact is that the tea must be hot to ensure adequate release of these beneficial agents.
- **Probiotics** - provided these are of proven quality and backed by scientific evidence (consult your doctor, nurse or dietician), these have a very positive effect upon the skin, especially inflammatory conditions such as rosacea. The link between inflammation of the gastrointestinal system and the skin has long been appreciated by dermatologists, and these 'friendly bacteria' help maintain a balanced 'ecosystem' within the body. The calming effect on the gut plays out as improved skin.
- **Water** - Not a super food per se, but not to be forgotten. Aim for two litres of clear, non-carbonated non-flavoured water per day to keep your system hydrated and to allow your body to digest and utilise the above ingredients to their optimum and to avoid fibre-related constipation.
- **Dark chocolate** - No list would be complete without at least one entry usually classified as a guilty pleasure. In moderation, dark chocolate, defined as >70 per cent cacao, delivers health benefits through antioxidants such as resveratrol, and also contains iron. Not to mention the immediate stress relief attested to by so many, including me!

Try to include as many of the above foods in your regular diet and you will experience powerful benefits.

Finally, remember that what you leave out is just as important as what you put into your body and life. Actively avoid excessive processed sugar and meat, saturated fats, alcohol, smoking, pollution and stress. The health benefits you enjoy will increase exponentially.

Bon appétit! ■

Dr Sheridan is a Fellow of the Australasian Academy of Facial Plastic Surgery (AAFPS) and the Australasian College of Dermatologists. Contact aafps.com.au or www.sdsl.com.au



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