



## Foods for radiant skin

Get a youthful glow | Lisa Evans

The age-old expression “you are what you eat” is true—especially when it comes to your complexion. To get a youthful glow this summer, make sure to pile your plate high with the right foods for healthy skin.

The foods you ingest affect not only the health of your inner organs but also your outer appearance. The skin is the largest organ in the body and as such requires a healthy diet to stay vibrant.

When your diet is lacking in certain nutrients, your body can shut down and become susceptible to illness. The same is true for your skin. Starving your skin of the nutrients it needs will leave it dry and prematurely aged, and can lead to other serious problems such as eczema and psoriasis.

A recent study led by Dr. Ian Stephen at the University of Nottingham revealed that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables can give your skin a healthier glow than a suntan. This golden glow is produced by carotenoids—antioxidants found in red and orange produce such as carrots and tomatoes, which help soak up damaging compounds produced by stress. So slap on a hat, slop on some sunscreen, and snack on some cherry tomatoes this summer for a healthy, risk-free glow. >



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## LIFESTYLE

There are other foods that contribute to healthy-looking skin as well. To add a youthful glow to your complexion, try these four beauty-licious summer foods.

### BERRIES

Strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries are not only delicious, but they are also rich in antioxidants that help keep your skin looking young and fresh. In a 2006 study researchers tested over 1,000 food samples to determine their antioxidant levels. Not surprisingly, these three berries, along with raspberries and cranberries, ranked in the top 50.

The antioxidants in berries are extremely effective at counteracting the negative effects of free radicals, such as those that are generated by excessive sun exposure. Free radicals damage the membrane of skin cells, potentially harming the cell DNA, which can lead to skin cancer.

Antioxidants help to protect cells, preventing further damage, guarding against premature aging, and keeping your skin looking youthful and vibrant.

### CARROTS

Add these vitamin-rich veggies to your garden this summer and get the added benefit of healthy, glowing skin. Carrots are a concentrated source of beta carotene, which is converted by the body into vitamin A—a powerful

antiaging mineral. Vitamin A aids in the development of skin cells and the maintenance of skin cell health, creating a healthy, youthful glow.

Carrots are also packed with vitamin C, which supports the formation of skin collagen, keeping skin looking youthful and plump.

### AVOCADOS

You probably don't know how good that summer guacamole is for your skin. Avocados are a great source of vitamins and minerals that help keep skin youthful.

In addition to being an excellent source of vitamins C and E, which, combined with selenium-rich foods, help to speed up the skin's healing process, avocados are packed full of healthy omega-3 fatty acids that prevent skin from drying out. Also, a 2010 study showed that avocado extracts are effective in reducing UV-induced cellular damage after sun exposure.

### BRAZIL NUTS

While peanuts and cashews typically top the charts of our favourite nuts, don't miss out on the beauty-enhancing content of Brazil nuts. These nuts help to protect the skin from the damaging effects of the sun's ultraviolet rays, potentially even reversing discolouration and wrinkles caused by sun exposure.

In addition, these skin-protecting powerhouses are an excellent source of vitamin E, a fat-soluble compound necessary for healthy skin and eyes. These nuts might be called the "beauty nut," as they not only are beneficial to maintaining healthy skin, but also can help improve the appearance of hair.

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## SERVING SUGGESTIONS

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### **Berries**

Top your cereal or yogourt with 1/2 cup (125 mL) plump, colourful berries, or pack a berry fruit salad for lunch for an extra punch of skin-protecting antioxidants.

### **Carrots**

Drop two small carrots and 1/2 cup (125 mL) orange juice in a blender for a double-dose of vitamin C, or include carrots and low-fat veggie dip in your lunch.

### **Avocado**

Add a slice of avocado to your turkey sandwich, or make guacamole for a summer party, topping up your guests with the omega-3s their skin is craving.

### **Brazil nuts**

Add a handful of these UV-protective nuts to your trail mix, or use them as a topping for your garden salad or pasta dish. **a**

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Lisa Evans is a freelance health and lifestyle writer from Toronto. Her work has previously appeared in *Canadian Immigrant*, *Our Canada*, and *Scene Magazine*.

