



Your diet may be aging you

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Recent studies have shown a correlation between many dietary elements and skin diseases including acne, rosacea, and perioral dermatitis. In my practice, nutritional counseling is as important as skin care counseling. I have found that inflammatory skin conditions can be improved to some extent with dietary modifications, and there is now evidence that the aging process can also be slowed with a healthy diet. Pre-

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vious studies have shown that intake of vegetables, fish, and foods high in vitamin C, carotenoids, olive oil, and linoleic acid are associated with decreased wrinkles.

In a Dutch population-based cohort study published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* in 2019, Mekić et al. investigated the association between diet and facial wrinkles in an elderly population. Facial photographs were used to evaluate wrinkle severity and diet of the partici-

pants was assessed with the Food Frequency Questionnaire and adherence to the Dutch Healthy Diet Index (DHDI).

The DHDI is a measure of the ability to adhere to the Dutch Guidelines for a Healthy Diet. The guidelines recommend a daily intake in the diet of at least 200 g of vegetables daily; at least 200 g of fruit; 90 g of brown bread, wholemeal bread, or other whole-grain products; and at least 15 g of unsalted nuts. One serving of fish (preferably oily fish) per week and little to no dairy, alcohol, red meat, cooking fats, and sugar is also recommended.

The study revealed that better adherence to the DHDI was significantly associated with fewer wrinkles among women but not men. Women who ate more animal meat and fats and carbohydrates had more wrinkles than did those with a fruit-dominant diet.

Although other healthy behaviors such as exercise and alcohol are likely to play a role in confounding these data, UV exposure as a cause of wrinkling was accounted for, and in the study, increased outdoor exercise was associated with more wrinkles. Unhealthy food can induce oxidative stress, increased skin and gut inflammation, and glycation, which are some of the physiologic mechanisms suggested to increase wrinkle formation. In contrast, nutrients in fruits and vegetables stimulate collagen production and DNA repair and reduce oxidative stress on the skin.

Nutritional advice is largely rare in internal medicine, cardiology, and even endocrinology. We are developing better ways to assess and understand



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the way foods interact and cause inflammation of the gut and the body and skin. I highly recommend nutritional education be a part of our residency training programs and to make better guidelines on the prevention of skin disease and aging available for both practitioners and patients. ■

References

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