

# Skin from the Inside Out

Eating for healthy skin.

This is part one in a two-part series about the skin. Look for part two in next month's issue...  
*Skin from the Outside In.*

by Julia Tatum Hunter, M.D.

The body is an orchestra, the organs are akin to the instruments, and they must work harmoniously in order to create the symphony. If one instrument is out of tune, it can throw off the melodies and harmonies. The skin, therefore, is not playing solo; the quality and sound of its notes rely on the rest of the body. The skin, being the surface we see every day, can also give a glimpse into the state of health of the inner workings of the body. For example, different facial breakout patterns are indicators of different internal imbalances. Forehead acne may indicate low-level food allergies, while spots along the cheeks can be a signal of increased stress and adrenal depletion.

## Walk the Middle Path

In Ayurveda, choices related to health involve treading the middle path between the extremes of deprivation and indulgence. In seeking health, there is the danger of extremes, people have become zealots about so many things.

Which brings us to the adage of know thyself. Checking in, listening to what your body wants, doesn't want and needs is an important practice. Our body is constantly providing us with feedback if we take the time to really listen then we learn to feel, see and hear its signals.

## Detoxification

Regular detoxification can be beneficial for skin health, and ongoing daily practices to promote detoxification are often more supportive than drastic purges done irregularly to flush toxins from the body and prevent them getting stuck in the skin.

## Aloe Vera

A classic remedy for cooling *pitta* (fire element) and healing the skin is aloe vera. Its name in Sanskrit, *kumari*, evokes beauty. Drink some aloe vera every day to promote skin health through regular detoxification. Aloe vera is anti-inflammatory; it promotes the health of cells in the lining of the digestive system, alleviates constipation and is soothing and calming.

Because of these properties, aloe vera can mitigate the effects of the low-grade food allergies most people experience. Additionally, it is full of important enzymes that stimulate digestion. Drinking an ounce or two before bed can facilitate digestion and reduce the heaviness of a feeling of a lead weight in the pit of the stomach.

When selecting aloe, choose organic whole leaf aloe if possible, if organic is not available, choose one made from the whole leaf.

Aloe vera does have an astringent nature, so people who have a *vata* constitution or *vata* imbalance should carefully observe their body's reaction or check in with their health-care provider when incorporating aloe vera into their regular routine.

## It's Easy Being Green

Aloe vera is one of many vital greens. Greens, particularly green leafy vegetables, are food for the entire body, including the skin. The more green you eat, then the closer to nature, health and balance you become. Toss your greens and have a variety of raw and cooked; raw foods contain vital enzymes, some cooked foods are easier to digest. Freshly squeezed green juices, powdered greens and whole food supplements can be more



concentrated sources of this antioxidant-rich, liver and skin-detoxifying category of culinary powerhouses.

Choose seasonally fresh greens and rotate among varieties like romaine, arugula, chard, kale, even dandelion, cilantro and parsley. Buying closer to home means that the benefits are maximized; vitamins degrade when foods are stored and shipped.

Greens promote the body's alkaline balance. The body's internal physiology (aside from the inside of the digestive tract) is naturally slightly alkaline. To maintain that alkaline balance, the body will rob the bones of alkaline-promoting minerals such as calcium. Fortunately, dark green leafy vegetable, and even green florets like broccoli are not only natural alkalizers, they contain calcium.

## Avoiding Acids

Excess acidity is one of the contributing factors to the current osteoporosis epidemic. Cancer thrives in an acidic environment, and too much acidity is implicated in other diseases and conditions such as inflammation and skin disorders. Acidity accelerates the aging process. Regular exercise creates more internal acidity, so it is necessary to consciously counteract this with dietary choices.

Some common foods, particularly refined sugars, are acidic in nature. Many animal proteins, including cow dairy, are predominately acidic. Goat and secondarily sheep dairy are less acidic than dairy products from cows.

Alkaline forms of protein include beans such as lentils, mung and black beans (a fabulously dense source of protein). Raw nuts are especially important alkaline protein sources, and raw, rather than cooked nuts, have more



digestible sources of protein. Raw almonds, walnuts and other nuts are healthy choices. Raw vegetables are effective alkalizers.

### Supplements

People engaged in intense exercise regimens often need to supplement their diets. In our modern-day agriculture, soil depletion is also a factor in obtaining all the necessary vitamins and minerals.

Water-soluble vitamins, such as the B vitamins and Vitamin C, are needed more frequently by the body, as they are not stored for long periods of time. Everything in the body is found in a ratio, and these ratios are often found in foods; whole food supplements contain the array of chemical forms the body requires.

A specific supplement that can be valuable for the skin is alpha lipoic acid (ALA). This slows down ticking of the body's internal clock; ALA is also a key enzyme cofactor in cellular metabolism and is a potent antioxidant and liver detoxifier found in spinach, broccoli, peas, brussel sprouts and tomatoes: taking 250 - 600 mg two hours after meals is recommended.

### Vitamin D

Moderation and walking the middle path is particularly important when considering Vitamin D. People are becoming increasingly Vitamin D deficient with the need to cover up more due to ozone depletion and the sun's rays penetrating the skin more deeply. While skin cancer is a concern, Vitamin D actually helps protect the skin from damage, a delicate balance is necessary here. Limited sun exposure (no more than 15 - 30 minutes) before 9:00 A.M. or after 4:00 P.M. is a recommendation for a balanced relationship with the sun. Using complete sun block and covering up with clothes and a hat when the sun is at its most intense minimizes damage.

### Essential Fatty Acids

Named for their literally essential nature, since these are fatty acids the body doesn't produce, the omega 3, 6 and 9 oils are important for skin and overall health. Flax and hemp are good vegetarian sources. Add flax oil to a shake and sprinkle whole ground flax on foods. Avoid cooking flax, and favor raw oils for maximum benefit.

### An Apple a Day...

...or an apricot, persimmon, bowl of raspberries or plate of blueberries are only a few of the antioxidant-rich fruits that contribute to healthy skin. Begin the day with some raw fruit, and incorporate other forms as desired. Read labels on dried fruit to ensure that they're not covered with sugar (and sulfites — to which many people experience low-grade allergies). Even better, slice and dehydrate your own.

Sweets from natural sources are better even than the empty promise of artificial sweeteners. Since the body perceives artificial sweeteners as sweet, tasting them creates the same insulin response as actually eating sugar. It's the ultimate deception that only harms your own health.

### From the Inside Out

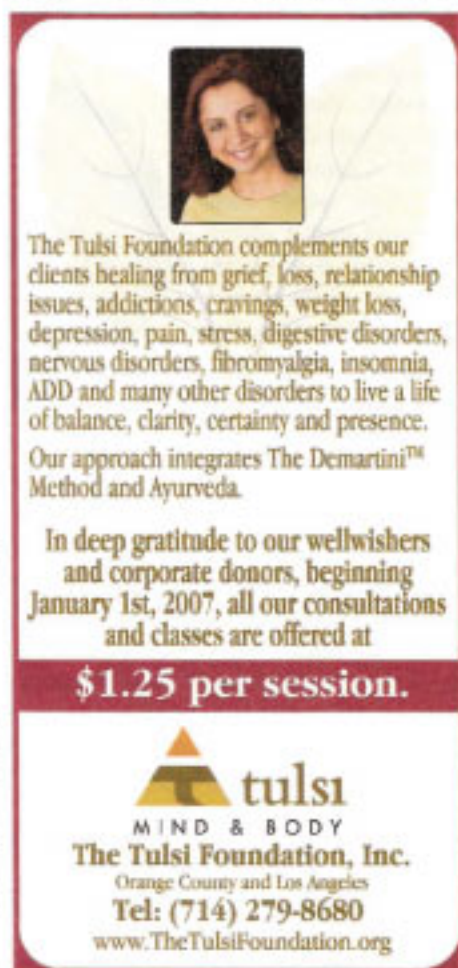
A magic pill does not produce healthy skin, the radiance and shine reflect the health of the body within, health we can choose with each trip to the farmers market, walk down

the aisles of the grocery store and with every salad we toss and vegetable we chop. Daily detoxification, (exercise that renews and regenerates our minds and bodies) and preparing meals for healthy skin promotes overall health, body, mind and even spirit.

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*Before using any of the above Ayurvedic remedies, consult with a qualified Ayurvedic practitioner or healthcare provider. The information given here represents the opinions and recommendations of the author and does not necessarily reflect the views of LA YOGA Ayurveda and Health magazine.*

*Julia Tatum Hunter, M.D., the founder of Skin Fitness Plus in Beverly Hills, CA, creates healthy bodies and skin in a holistic, anatomically and physiologically correct method, addressing the skin from the inside and out. In Oct., she is giving free Tues. night lectures focused on healthy skin at the West Hollywood Whole Foods. [skinfitnessplus.com](http://skinfitnessplus.com)*




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