

# Eat Young

## Nutritional Age-Defying Secrets

The majority of aging occurs through environmental influences, such as diet. It is estimated that DNA's role in how skin matures may only be 30 percent. The remaining 70 percent of skin aging factors are from environmental sources such as stress, poor sleeping habits, and exposure to environmental toxins which all contribute significantly to the inflammatory process and the production of free-radicals, which are the basis of age-related diseases and wrinkled, sagging skin. The good news? We can do something about environmental aging factors, especially our food choices.

A proactive antioxidant-rich diet can help reduce the signs of aging, slow the aging process itself, and in some cases reverse previous damage. Conversely, eating the wrong foods can create a cascading inflammatory process, actually speeding up aging. Processed foods, sugars, breads, pasta, and baked goods can all increase levels of pro-inflammatory peptides. Here are my contenders for the **five worst foods or food ingredients** for skin:

**1. Sugar.** According to Dr. Nicholas Perricone, "Sugar is the enemy." Sugar creates inflammation, attaching to collagen. The result is sagging skin, which has lost its tone, becoming stiff and inflexible. Controlling blood sugar and insulin levels is critical.

**2. Hydrogenated oils, fake fats, and saturated full fats.** These nasty ingredients, found in processed foods, wreck havoc. Hydrogenated oils leach linoleic and linolenic fatty acids, which are needed to lubricate hair, skin, and joints. Fake fats coat arterial walls and bind with fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K, compromising the immune system and setting the stage for cancers. And saturated full fats (i.e., dairy products) are mucus-forming foods that line the colon, preventing absorption of vitamins, in addition to being significant bacterial sources (think acne) because they ferment.

**3. Nitrates.** Used to preserve food, nitrates are found in most deli and delivery foods and in many restaurant items. In our bodies, nitrates convert to nitrosamines, a powerful cancer-causing chemical and a major producer of free-radicals (the cause of sagging skin).

**4. Alcohol.** It's simple: alcohol is dehydrating, and while a little now and then is okay, ongoing over-indulgence can rob the connective tissue of its moisture. Without moisture, skin loses its tone and its elasticity and skin texture is compromised. Over the long term, permanent damage is possible.

**5. Sodium.** Sodium (salt) retains water within the tissues, creating inflammation and inhibiting proper kidney function which can create elimination problems, exacerbating

conditions such as acne. It is a balance of salt and water which facilitates elimination and creates healthy connective tissues.

In contrast to processed foods, fresh fruits and vegetables are loaded with antioxidants, the antidote to free-radicals and the key to vibrant skin. Here is my list of the **top five best foods or food ingredients**. These foods are nutritionally power packed to actively counter-balance the effects of environmental aging factors.

**1. Wild Alaskan Sockeye salmon (oil)** is a great healthy-aging meal and possibly the purest of all ocean fish. It is the richest of all salmon species in the powerful antioxidant, astaxanthin, a natural carotenoid that gives a rich red color to the oil and rivals vitamin E with its ability to quench singlet oxygen free-radicals. As an omega 3, salmon, along with other cold water fish such as sardines and mackerel, also offers protective benefits as EFAs (**Essential Fatty Acids**). If your skin is dry, prone to inflammation, and frequently dotted with blemishes, you may be lacking EFAs. Our bodies need these important elements, but we can't make them ourselves. It is essential to have a balance of EFAs. While most omega 6s (think processed foods) contribute to free-radicals, gamma-linolenic acid (GLA) which is found in plant oils such as black current, hemp, borage, and evening primrose, is a healthy exception.

**2. Olive oil and olive oil extract.** The polyphenols extracted from olive oil actively participate in prevention and/or reduction of the effects of free-radicals associated with cross-linking of collagen and wrinkle formation, along with skin disorders such as psoriasis and eczema. A newly discovered process of concentrating these polyphenols into a proprietary olive oil extract known as Olivenol yields up to 300 times more polyphenols than conventional olive oil.

**3. Green tea and green tea extract.** These are rich in antioxidants that reduce inflammation and protect cell membranes, along with a unique amino acid, L-theanine, which reduces stress while maintaining mental alertness. Proven to reduce the effects of sun damage, green tea in turn reduces the risk of cancers, due to its high polyphenol concentration. The polyphenol most abundant in green tea is the concentrated active ingredient EGCG from the pulp, which in proper amounts also stimulates metabolism, strengthens blood vessels and red blood cells, regenerates vitamin E, and blocks oxidative stress.

**4. Blueberries and blueberry extract.** Blueberries are loaded with potent nutrients such as antioxidant vitamins C and E, along with a special classification of antioxidants called



*Eat young for healthy skin — seek fresh local foods for the highest nutritional content and the lowest environmental footprint.*

anthocyanins, which are particularly good at protecting the skin. Blueberries also offer ellagic acid, another plant chemical responsible for fighting free radicals. According to new research by Tufts University, blueberries have the highest rating for fighting free radicals.

**5. Kale and broccoli – the green family.** Cruciferous vegetables such as kale, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and spinach are rich in sulfur and contain phytonutrients which help maintain normal metabolism, support critical detoxifying enzymes, and assist with a normal male and female hormonal balance.

In the same way eating the wrong foods can create a pro-aging condition, eating the right foods can counter-balance the aging process, so "eat young" and seek out wholesome, fresh foods which are raised locally to ensure not only the lightest environmental footprint, but also the highest nutritional content. Focus specifically on antioxidants, the antidote to free-radicals as part of an eat-young-for-healthy-skin program.

*Carmen McManus obtained a degree in Holistic Studies from Vermont College and is a Dr. Hauschka Certified Holistic Skin Care and Massage Therapist practicing locally since 1992. She and the staff of certified skincare, massage, and nail therapists are available for spa services at Bloom Organics, 2065 Siesta Drive, Sarasota. Call 941-362-4194.*

