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EASY TO INGEST

You are what you eat, but can you eat your way to better skin? With expert input from Harley Street dermatologist Claudia Louch and nutritional therapist Elizabeth Montgomery, VIRTUE explores the link between beauty and nutrition.

Pharmacy shelves are stacked with scores of vitamins and minerals, with many products claiming to beautify from the inside out. Some beauty vitamins retail at £30.00 per month, making supplementation a rather expensive habit. Yet there is little to suggest over-the-counter supplements actually work.

According to the most recent figures from Euromonitor, the UK market for vitamins and supplements is worth £738 million in its entirety, with a projected annual growth rate of just 1% from 2012 – 2017. The market is not small, but the slow growth suggests we are beginning to get sceptical about supplements. After all, NHS guidelines state that we can get all the vitamins we need from a balanced diet alone.

To sort the fact from the fiction, VIRTUE has enlisted holistic dermatologist Claudia Louch and nutritional therapist Elizabeth Montgomery to explain three key beauty-boosting nutrients.

BIOTIN

Biotin is a B vitamin associated with hair and skin condition. It can be found in many supplement products such as hair growth complex Viviscal. You can, however, boost your biotin levels with some simple dietary tweaks.

“Biotin actually occurs naturally in many foods, and it is known to support skin health,” Louch tells VIRTUE. “Wheatgerm, eggs, dairy, nuts, swiss chard and salmon are all good sources of biotin,” says Louch.

There are a number of biotin tablets on the market, though many contain bulking and anti-caking agents such as silicon dioxide. Instead VIRTUE recommends the organic wheatgerm oil by Fushi. Cold pressed and unrefined, the pure oil can be drizzled in salad or can be applied topically to brighten the complexion and soothe sunburn.

Fushi cold pressed wheatgerm oil £17.50 at fushi.co.uk

SULPHUR

Montgomery believes beauty supplements are misleading. “There are many products that claim to help skin, hair and nail health, but the problem is that they are often promoted as a “magic bullet solution”, rather than as an extra ingredient

to support a healthy diet,” she says. Her preferred approach is to enrich the diet with food dense in nutrients, particularly sulphur.

“Sulphur is known as ‘the beauty mineral’ and therefore, eating sulphur rich foods such as garlic and onions is very beneficial to skin health,” explains Montgomery. Seaweed is charged with sulphur, combining with chlorophyll and iron to fight free radicals in the body.

“Seaweed is one of nature’s greatest superfoods. It gives the body an incredible amount of minerals that are often lacking in the diet, which help to promote hair growth, harder nails and glowing skin,” she claims. Though snacks like Itsu’s seaweed thins are on trend, in order to get the full benefits of seaweed try a pure, ground seaweed powder. Add a spoonful to salad dressings or sprinkle in a juice as you would spirulina.

The Atlantic Kelp Company dried organic seaweed £4.99 at planetorganic.com

CAROTENOIDS

“Carotenoids are known to be powerful antioxidant substances playing an essential role in the neutralisation of free radicals,” Louch explains.

In an urban environment, skin is constantly exposed to damaging free radicals. In order to limit the damage, Louch suggests increasing your intake of carotenoids, the red, yellow and orange pigments found within plants.

“Results obtained from studies on human skin have shown that carotenoids are vital components of the antioxidative protective system of the human skin,” Louch adds. “They must be administered by means of antioxidant-rich products, such as fruit and vegetables, and are best absorbed with fat in a meal.”

As the name suggests, carrots are the best source of the pigment, though spinach and melons are also effective. Try cold pressed carrot juice for an easy way to up your intake. The Perky Melons juice by Plenish Cleanse is a carotenoid-charged blend of carrot, cantaloupe melon and pink grapefruit. It is a refreshing way to get an antioxidant fix on-the-go.

Perky Melons juice by Plenish Cleanse, £13.50 at plenishcleanse.com