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HOW would you feel if you didn't have to shop for those jars and bottles of creams any more? All those lotions and potions you relied upon to help you fight tan and acne and erase those menacing dark circles from around your eyes. Did you know that every single ingredient needed to attain that glowing blemish-free complexion is probably lying right there in your kitchen? While we keep reading about how eating the right kind of food can do wonders for our hearts and kidneys, the miraculous impact of several kinds of food on the skin is often given a miss.

"You are what you eat" is an accurate enough adage, and a clear and glowing complexion speaks volumes about our lifestyle and attitude. Good skin serves us well as a calling card, especially in times like these, when we are battling much more than age. "Present-day stressful lives and pollution only make things worse so one has to make that extra effort to have great skin and there can't be a better way than eating well," says Dr Charulata Bose, consultant dermatologist, Indraprastha Apollo hospital.

FROM THE INSIDE, OUT



A GOOD digestive system is the key to good skin. This is because a poor digestion leaves the body without the required nutrients. Nutritionists say that papaya is a magical fruit that helps keep digestion ship-shape and constipation, which is a common cause for skin flare-ups, at bay. The enzyme papain in this tropical fruit is the ingredient that conditions the gut. Other than the papaya, low fat dairy products that contain vit A also work well in maintaining intestinal health.

"Low-fat yogurt is not only rich in vit A, but also has acidophilus — bacteria that is good for digestion, which in turn reflects in healthy looking skin," says Honey Khanna, nutritionist, Max Superspeciality.

BUILDING THAT BARRIER



GATE keepers have always been respected for the role they play, so why should they be ignored when it comes to the skin? "Cell membranes of the skin act as barriers to harmful things and also as the passageway for nutrients to cross in and out and for waste

products to get in and out of the cell," says Puja Tewari, nutritionist, Fortis hospital. Food such as walnuts, flax seeds, tofu, canola and olive oil has essential fatty acids which are responsible for healthy cell membranes. This outer barrier of the skin cells is responsible for the flow of nutrients and water into it and toxins out of it. Because the cell membrane also retains the moisture, the stronger that barrier, the more hydrated your skin, and the plumper and younger it looks.

Since the sun is an inevitable part of our lives anyway, we might as well get used to its destructive effects and shield ourselves from it. Selenium is one such mineral that helps you do this. Experts say this mineral plays a key role in the health of skin cells. Some studies show that even skin damaged by the sun may suffer fewer consequences if selenium levels are high. Food that contains high levels of selenium is whole wheat bread, brazil nuts and cereals. The polyphenols in green tea is also protective to the cell membrane, and has anti-inflammatory properties which help those prone to acne from contracting it.

While it is apparent that there is a large fare that vegetarians can turn to in order to have great skin, non-vegetarian eaters can take heart, as they too have plenty of choices of skin food. Red meat, eggs and fish contain zinc which is which produces and protects collagen — which lends skin its elasticity. Moreover, the omega-3 fatty-acids in fish are responsible for the health of the skin cell membranes. They also have anti-inflammatory properties and offer protection against ultra-violet damage caused by the sun.

ABOUT BROCCOLI & BEAUTY

Skin foods are abundant with the vitamins and anti-oxidants needed to halt ageing and can help your skin acquire that healthy, glowing appearance you have always only dreamt of

ENVIABLY RADIANT

SO YOU have been eternally jealous of your school friend who has had a radiant and blemish-free complexion ever since you have known her. In all probability while you were gorging on deep fried pakoras and creamy cakes at the cafeteria, this pretty lass was in the corner munching on home-cooked stir-fried veggies. Chances are those veggies were fried in healthy oils. The list of these includes mustard, canola and olive oil, which have essential fatty-acids that

play an important role in lubricating the skin and making it look and feel healthier overall. Since any fat, even a healthy one, is high in calories, experts say one doesn't need more than about two table-spoons a day.

Good hydration also plays a big role in keeping skin looking healthy and sparkling. When that hydration comes from pure, clean water — not liquids such as soda or even soup — experts say the skin cells actually rejoice. Water helps in absorbing nutrients and flushing out toxins out of the skin, automati-

cally leaving the skin looking younger. When properly hydrated, one sweats more efficiently and this helps keep skin clean and clear as well.

KEEPING THE WRINKLES AT BAY

EVER wondered how that aunty next door managed to have clear, line-free skin even into her fifties. How has she kept the wrinkles off? You wonder. She has probably done this by eating lots of fruits every day and getting ample rest for her entire life. While your mother told you that 'eating an apple a day keeps the doctor away' she forgot to mention how it wouldn't keep those awe-struck and revered stares away. Slashing up on food high in antioxidants, such as strawberries, plums and mangoes, helps fight free-radicals and prevent ageing. Free radicals — like the kind formed from sun exposure — damage the membrane of skin cells, potentially allowing damage to the DNA of that cell. Antioxidants and

other phytochemicals in fruits and certain vegetables can protect cells from too much damage. "When you help protect the cells from damage and disintegration, you also guard against premature aging. In this respect, these fruits may very well help keep your skin younger looking longer," says Khanna. Lycopene is the pigment that gives many fruits and vegetables their red colour and is a proven antioxidant, capable of preventing damage to the skin by protecting it from the sun.

This is found in a variety of food including tomatoes, water melon and guava. Food containing beta-carotene, which is a form of Vit A and a strong antioxidant, is also protective. Beta-carotene is found in deep yellow, orange and red food such as carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach, apricot, red and yellow peppers.

PLUMPING UP THE CHEEKS



"WOOLLI woogli woosh" when sung in a sing-song tune takes one back to the endearing Ponds commercial. While Ponds would want us to believe their cream is responsible for that "I-can't-help-but-squeeze-your-cheeks" feeling, in reality you could just chomp on an orange and create your own plump cheeks. Apples can also help give you those podgy cheeks you yearn for. The chubby factor of the skin is attributable to collagen — a component that provides structural support, maintains resiliency and shape and also assists with wound healing. Vit C is an anti-oxidant that helps in the production and protection of collagen fibres in the skin.

Some great sources of this vitamin are orange, broccoli, sprouts, green pepper, strawberry and kiwi.

Food containing zinc also builds supple skin and for this you need to stack up on the whole grains, mushrooms, nuts and cheese. This fruit contains quercetin — a plant compound — which improves the firmness of collagen, giving skin its elasticity.

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Foods can be applied topically too

There are a lot of food items that you will find in your kitchen cupboard that you can pat onto your face to experience a miracle impact. When it comes to topical application of food, one should keep the skin type in mind — whether oily, normal or dry.

LEMON

IT HAS a good amount of vit C, an antioxidant which makes it easier to acquire lovely and ravishing skin. The nutrients in lemons work as a good cleanser both internally and externally. It's acidic property makes it an efficient astringent.



PAPAYA

IS HIGH in alpha-hydroxy-acids that work as a good exfoliator of skin cells, and help in the rejuvenation and growth of new skin cells



HONEY

Touted as the oldest sweetener, this sweet treat has a strong ability to attract and retain water, thereby moisturising it when applied on the skin. It is high in alpha-hydroxy-acid which is an excellent exfoliator. It is also known to have phytochemicals — which kill bacteria, viruses and fungus. Good for oily skin.

YOGURT

IT CONTAINS lactic acid which helps dissolve dead skin cells and refine texture. This not only helps in the re-growth of skin, but also in the removal of blackheads and opening up of clogged pores.

TOMATO

IT CONTAINS a strong antioxidant lycopene, combined with the other powerful antioxidants such as vit C and beta-carotene — all of which work on the skin to neutralise free radicals that could otherwise damage cells and cell membranes. This preservation of cells and their membranes reduces the potential for inflammation too. Being rich in vit C it is helpful for acne and brightening dull skin. Its naturally acidic properties help it balance the skin and get rid of excessive oil. It is an ideal vegetable for skin care because of its cooling and astringent features.



CUCUMBER



As cucumber and the skin share the same level of hydrogen, it becomes easier for cucumber to mask all the problem areas. It helps in

soothing and softening the skin which can get one relaxed in no time. Due to its cooling effect it can be termed as a magic wand for all skin problems. The cleaning and cleansing property helps the skin tremendously, making it soft and supple. Its high water content prevents dryness of the face and its cleansing properties prevent pimples, blackheads and wrinkles. It helps in reducing swelling around the eyes or warding off those dark circles under the eyes. Use them as eye-pads and see the puffiness and tired sensation of your eyes vanish.

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