



OrthoAdvice

Maintaining healthy skin throughout the years

By Gary Pennington, MD

Your skin begins aging from the moment you are born. How you and your parents treat your skin from that moment will determine your skin's apparent age as you progress through life. Many factors determine your skin health: amount of sun exposure, whether you smoke, genetics/pigmentation, age, nutrition/weight, and hormones.

Factors Affecting Skin Health

Sun and ultraviolet (UV) light exposure are the number one factors that accelerate skin aging. UV light changes your skin down to the base DNA level. Over the years, these changes greatly increase the risk of skin cancer. This exposure also results in the loss of elasticity and causes premature aging. In youth, our soft, thin skin allows much more UV light to penetrate, as it has not developed photo-protection, the mechanisms in our body that help us cope with molecular damage caused by the sun. This all reinforces that early youth is the most important time to protect your skin.

Smoking also causes significant damage to our skin. It decreases oxygenation and nutrients available to the skin and increases the free radicals available, thereby increasing cancer risk. These three factors are well known to increase cancer formation and decrease the skin's ability to repair itself.

Pigmentation and genetics are directly related and also play a role. As the skin's baseline pigment increases, so does the baseline preservation of the skin to sun exposure. There are other genetic diseases which affect our skin throughout life.

As we age, all of these factors take on a cumulative effect.

Nutrition itself can affect your skin in many ways. In folks who are considered to be thin or underweight, the skin appears to age more quickly. Not eating a healthy diet or getting the proper nutrients can also increase the skin's age.

Hormonal influence on the skin is seen in both men and women. As testosterone and estrogen levels fall, the decrease in collagen production results in increased wrinkles. In women, oral contraceptives and pregnancy increase hormone levels, leading to hyperpigmentation, which appears as patches of brown or grayish skin on the face.

Protecting Your Skin

Now you know the important factors in skin health and aging. While the perfect scenario of continued youth, perfect nutrition, and no vices is virtually unobtainable, it is still possible to take other steps to ensure healthy skin at all ages.

First, it's important to start early with protecting your skin. When out in the sun, use both physical and chemical blocks, such as clothing, hats, and sunscreen. Avoid smoking. Get proper nutrition by eating a healthy, vitamin-rich diet. Lastly, get into the routine of using skin care products such as moisturizers and creams to lessen the signs of aging.

How We Can Help

At Crystal Clinic Plastic Surgeons, we want to improve your skin's health by providing education and effective skin care products. Along with our physicians, we have on-site skin care specialists who can help you find the best product for your skin type. To discuss your specific needs, call our office for a personal skin care consultation.



Dr. Pennington is a board-certified, fellowship-trained plastic surgeon. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Kentucky, where he also received his medical degree from the School of Medicine. He served residencies at Ohio Valley Medical Center (general surgery) and Akron City Hospital (plastic and reconstructive surgery). Dr. Pennington specializes in plastic and reconstructive surgery, and surgery of the hand and upper extremity, with an interest in skin cancer, melanoma, cosmetic surgery and microsurgery.



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