

Stopping the Clock: Culprits of Aging Skin



Aging is inevitable, and as we get older, the effects of aging on our bodies becomes more apparent. Generally, our skin starts to age while we are in our twenties, but it should take several decades for that aging to catch up to us and become visible. Today, however, the effects of aging are usually all too visible for everyone to see.

Common effects of aging on the skin are wrinkles, age spots, and dryness. As we age, our skin produces less oil, which leaves our skin vulnerable to the climate and, therefore, extreme drying. People also generally experience thinner skin due to skin fat loss, which leaves skin sallow and less full. Unfortunately, gravity also has its effect, and begins to pull everything down.

Contrary to popular belief though, there are ways to combat the appearance and severity of skin aging. First and foremost is the regulation of sun exposure. Direct sunlight is one of the biggest contributors to premature aging. To avoid the effects of sun damage, wear an SPF of 15 or higher every day and wear protective clothing. The sun is potent all year long. Also, avoid false sunlight and UV rays in tanning beds and sun lamps. Such lights can prove even more harmful than normal sunlight. Blue-eyed and fair-skinned people have been proven to show more direct signs of aging and should be especially careful when in the sun.

Cigarettes are arguably the biggest contributor to deep wrinkles and premature aging after sun exposure. Prolonged smoking and inhalation increases the number of visible fine lines and wrinkles, skin takes longer to heal, and pigmentation and age spots become apparent. Nicotine constricts the blood vessels and decreases oxygen flow to the skin, essentially cutting off a healthy nutrient supply.

If you have heard the myth that facial exercise will maintain facial health in the future, you should probably stop now. Studies have shown that repetitive facial motions only serve to increase fine lines and wrinkles in the future. Also, try to mix up your sleeping positions. If you always sleep with your cheek on the pillow in the same way, your skin will wrinkle easier as you age.

One of your best defenses against aging skin is a healthy, balanced diet. Keep your diet loaded with essential oils, fish, olives, nuts, whole grains, fruits and vegetables, total fats (as opposed to saturated fats), water, tea, reduced-fat dairy products and supplements such as Zinc. Furthermore, keep your skin hydrated at all times. This will aid in the skin's natural defense system against damaging free radicals.

So, although we will all eventually experience aging, you can slow the process. Just be smart about what you are putting in your body, and be aware of what you are exposing your body to.