

6 DIET

Diet plays too important a role in the condition of your skin and hair to ignore. The best cosmetics cannot completely compensate for poor and/or inadequate nutrition.

A beneficial nutrition relies on:

- fresh raw fruits and vegetables; fermented vegetables; sprouted grains, nuts, and seeds; animal protein; raw milk cheese; unrefined vegetable oils; raw butter; cod liver oil; and unrefined complex carbohydrates;
- minimizes cooked foods and alcohol; and
- avoids hydrogenated or refined vegetable oils, polyunsaturated vegetable oils, refined sugar and flour, and pasteurized homogenized milk.

Consult *Nourishing Traditions* for a wealth of details.

If you do nothing else, please eat unrefined flax and/or pumpkin oil daily, drink lots of water (dry hair is often related to inadequate water consumption), and adopt herbal teas as daily beverages. The former is the best source of essential fatty acids; at its simplest, you can just swallow it by the tablespoon or take it in gel caps.

Herbal teas are similar to infusions. There are herbs to supply vitamins and minerals as well as detoxify, relax, soothe, stimulate, and tone the body. Herbs are also used for specific medical purposes; there are several books in my sources that can inform you about these uses.

Herbal teas may be made with either fresh or dried herbs. Use a non-reactive pot and pure water. Unless stated otherwise, use 1 teaspoon dried herb or 1 tablespoon fresh herb per 1 cup water. Pour boiling water over the herb and let steep for 5–15 minutes, depending on the herb. Strain and drink. Herbal teas may be sweetened, preferably with honey or brown rice syrup; milk is not advised. To improve the flavor of some teas, use a blend of several herbs.

Tonic herbs cleanse the body and improve its condition.

- Borage is a general blood purifier which promotes clearing toxic residues in the tissues. Steep for 15 minutes.
- Burdock is effective for skin diseases and especially eczema. Drink a decoction in doses of a wineglassful, 3 or 4 times a day a decoction made of 1 oz. of root and seeds to 3 cups of water, boiled down to 2 cups.
- Chickweed is healing and rich in vitamins and minerals. Steep for 15 minutes.
- Dandelion is tonic-stimulant and removes poisons from the body. Steep for 10 minutes.
- Echinacea is a blood purifier and is used for eczema and acne. Simmer for 10 minutes, then steep for 5 minutes.
- Rosehips are tonic and high in vitamin C and many minerals. Soak overnight 6–8 dried hips in a cup of cold water. In the morning, bring it to a boil gently and simmer for 5 minutes.
- Sassafras is a blood purifier and is good for skin problems. It has long been considered a spring tonic. Steep for 10 minutes.
- Stinging nettle is rich in vitamins and minerals and is tonic, diuretic, and a blood purifier. It is used to stimulate the digestive system and is an excellent remedy for anemia. Steep 2–3 T. leaves for 10 minutes.

Herbs that induce *relaxation* relieve the effects of stress and tension on the face: “tight muscles, grimacing, wrinkles, and loss of skin tone.”⁹

- Borage is calmative. It can be combined with half as much basil to make a relaxing tea. Steep for 5–10 minutes.
- Catnip, *Nepeta cataria*, is soothing and relieves pain; it is also high in vitamin C. Steep for 10 minutes.
- Chamomile is calmative. Steep for 5–10 minutes. Nice flavored with grated fresh ginger.
- Lemon balm, *Melissa officinalis*, is calmative and useful for nervous problems, melancholy, and insomnia. Steep for 10 minutes.

- Lemon verbena is sedative. Cut up 6 leaves to yield about 2 teaspoonsful. Steep for 5 minutes.
- Linden or lime flowers soothe the nerves. Steep for 10 minutes. Fragrant and sweet, pleasant flavor.
- Peppermint is good for nervousness and insomnia. Steep for 10 minutes.

Herbs that promote *sleep* support the nightly regeneration of the skin and body.

- Anise is good for insomnia. Crush 1 teaspoon seeds, steep in water or milk for 10 minutes.
- Bee balm, *Monarda didyma*, is sleep inducing. Simmer for 10 minutes.
- Hops are hypnotic and sedative. They are used to calm the nervous system and for insomnia and restlessness. Use 2 teaspoons herb in 1 cup cold water, heat, and simmer for 2 minutes. Excessive doses or prolonged use can have detrimental effects and should be avoided.
- Lavender is sedative. Use 1 teaspoon flowers or 2 teaspoons leaves, steep for 10 minutes.
- Lettuce is soothing and sedative and is useful for nervous conditions and insomnia, especially when allowed to go to seed. Lettuce should be used as fresh as possible; choose the dark green outer leaves. Simmer gently the leaves of one smallish plant in 2 cups water for 10–15 minutes.
- Red clover, *Trifolium pratense*, is a blood cleanser as well as a nervine (soother of nerves). Steep for 10–15 minutes.
- Skullcap is sedative and tonic. It is good for nervous conditions, insomnia, and general restlessness. Steep for 30 minutes.
- Thyme, *Thymus vulgaris*, is sedative. Steep for 3–5 minutes.

Herbs that contain concentrations of vitamins and/or minerals enrich the body.

- Stinging nettle leaves drunk as a tea it is an excellent remedy for anemia—the vitamin C content ensures that the iron it also contains is properly absorbed.

Eating clay daily can be an effective way to treat acne, eczema, and hives. Because these conditions are often caused by the inability of the body to properly expel internal toxins through the skin, clay can remedy the skin problems by eliminating the toxins internally. Eating clay is thoroughly described in Ran Knishinsky's *The Clay Cure*.

A commercial supplement named Viviscal® has been successful in decreasing hair loss and stimulating hair growth; improved nails are another benefit. It is made in Finland of a proprietary marine compound (also described as “cartiligenous seafood extract” of North Pacific origin), acerola cherry (source of vitamin C), and a silica compound. This suggests that including fish oil (especially cod liver oil), fish cartilage, a natural source of vitamin C, and an herb high in silica (like coltsfoot and horsetail) in your diet may benefit your hair. It may be that an effective gelatin supplement would also be beneficial.

Bone broths “are extremely nutritious, containing the minerals of bone, cartilage, marrow and vegetable as electrolytes ... [, an] easily-assimilated form.” Proteinaceous gelatin in meat broths “attracts digestive juices for rapid and effective digestion.” Fish stock is especially rich in minerals, including iodine, and, when made from fish heads, contains “thyroid hormone and other substances that nourish the [human] thyroid.” *Nourishing Traditions* is the source of this information as well as bone broth recipes.

Given the success of Viciscal®, dietary bone broth may prove equally effective at improving hair and nails.