

## **Soak Up Nutrients This Summer - Healthy Hair, Skin and Nails Depend on Good Nutrition**

*Originally Published in the Calgary Herald - June 2006;*

*Written by Samara Felesky-Hunt*

**Question: I find the summer is very hard on my hair, skin and nails. Is there anything I can do with my diet to make sure they stay healthy and strong?**

A diet rich in vitamins and minerals can have a positive impact on the health of your skin, hair and nails. Eating a well balanced diet including a variety of foods can protect your skin, hair and nails from the damages of the sun and damaging effect of summer activities.

### **Feed Your Skin**

Although summer is a time to get outside, the sun can leave skin looking and feeling dry and worn out. Sunscreens can protect against sun damage but so can a healthy diet. Vitamin A rich foods promote healthier skin, not to mention the benefits to your eyes and even your teeth. Vitamin A is necessary for repairing and maintaining healthy skin tissue. Vitamin A rich foods such as carrots, sweet potatoes, acorn squash and dark green leafy vegetables should be a part of your summer menu.

Antioxidants, primarily vitamin E and vitamin C can help to protect skin cells from the ravages of free radicals, a harmful by product of sunlight. Antioxidants are also important in the formation of a protein known as collagen, which helps strengthen and protect your skin as well as bones and tendons. Nuts, seeds and olive oil along with citrus fruits, berries and red peppers keep skin healthy.

B vitamins, including biotin, are nutrients required in sufficient amounts to ensure healthy development of skin cells.

While participating in summer activities, it is important to hydrate with fluids. Water is necessary for skin to look and be healthy. Dehydration can have a dramatic effect on the appearance of your skin, but also effect energy levels, and even cause headaches, and lead to fainting and diarrhea.

### **Vitamin D Daily**

Sunscreens block harmful UVA/UVB rays that can be damaging to the skin, but they also block our body's ability to synthesize vitamin D. Recent reports suggest many Canadians may not be getting enough vitamin D, especially breastfed babies, dark skin individuals, and seniors. Vitamin D is necessary for the development of healthy bones and teeth, and helps in the absorption and use of calcium and phosphorus. Fortified milk and yogurts, eggs, canned salmon contain vitamin D. Choosing a multivitamin with vitamin D is a good idea all year round.

### **Healthy Hair**

Your diet can help in maintaining healthy and rich hair. Several nutrients are needed to maintain a healthy blood supply that delivers oxygen to the hair and scalp, so it is important to eat a variety of foods each day. Iron, in particular, is important for the health of your hair. Iron- rich foods include red meats, eggs, beans, dried fruits and fortified cereals.

The sun's UVA rays can cause damage to the cuticle and cortex of the hair shaft. Hair protection is available from essential nutrients like folic acid found in oranges and green leafy vegetables. Vitamins B6, found in bananas and vitamin B12, in animal protein rich foods feed hair cells too.



**The Downtown Sports Clinics - TD Square**  
300, 304 – 8th Ave S.W. Calgary, AB T2P 1C2  
Phone: (403) 233-7007  
Email: e-nutrition@telus.net

### **Safe Guard Your Nails**

Fitness activities, gardening and exposure to the sun can all cause nails to split, chip, and crack. Nail polish can protect your nails, however ensuring your body gets all the right nutrients will keep your nails healthy and strong. Vitamins, E, and C, in addition to, minerals such as iron, selenium and zinc feed nails and keep them strong. Chicken, seafood, Brazil nuts are rich in selenium and red meats, legumes, and fortified cereals are zinc rich.

So what you eat - or fail to eat- can have an impact on our skin, nails and hair. The truth is that our skin, hair and nails are often mirrors of what is going on inside of us.

Interested in learning how better nutrition can help you?

Contact Samara Felesky-Hunt & Associates - Registered Dietitian and Nutritionist

Phone: (403) 233-7007

Email: e-nutrition@telus.net