



# Eating for Beauty

With Emma Sutherland



We all know that beauty comes from within so are there beauty specific nutrients that will have you glowing like Cleopatra? Unfortunately basic vitamin and mineral deficiencies are very common – even if you eat a reasonably balanced diet, a deficiency can occur. The nutrient levels found in soil is becoming lower and lower and this results in fruit and vegetables with less vitamin and mineral content. Many medications, as well as alcohol, will deplete the body of certain nutrients. The oral contraceptive pill is well recognised to leach the body of various nutrients as well as reduce beneficial gut flora.

## The Top 9 Beauty Nutrients

### Vitamin A

This vitamin is required for cell differentiation and gives external cells their structural integrity. It helps to maintain epithelial tissue and promotes smooth, soft skin. It is also an anti oxidant and anti bacterial. Deficiency signs are evident when you have impaired night vision, perifollicular keratinosis (a build up of keratin around the hair follicle which causes bumpy skin), dry, flaky hair and scalp, acne, dry eyes and mouth ulcers. Food sources include liver, butter, cod liver oil, cheese.

### Vitamin E

Vitamin E has a role as a major antioxidant – it stabilizes cell membranes and protects the skin which is sensitive to oxidation. As you are well aware, oxidative damage results in an aging effect on the skin. A deficiency can be seen in cold hands and feet, stretch marks, hyperkeratosis of heels, calf tenderness and yellow tinged fingernails. Food sources include wheat germ, sunflower seeds, kale and cod liver oil.

### Protein

Protein is the second most plentiful substance in the body after water. Proteins are formed when chains of amino acids link together in specific sequences. The powerful antioxidant glutathione is produced from three amino acids. As cells age glutathione levels decrease up to 30% and result in an aging process in skin and soft tissues. Other deficiency signs include soft fingernails with transverse ridges, collapsed foot arches, gum recession and a loss of dermal recoil on the back of the hands. Food sources include nuts, seeds, meat, fish, poultry, legumes and lentils.

### Vitamin B

There are approximately ten different B vitamins and they are commonly found in combination in foods and supplements. These vitamins are essential for energy production, DNA synthesis and repair as well as the metabolism of carbohydrates, fats and proteins. You will notice a deficiency of B vitamins from signs such as lethargy, cracks in the corner of the mouth, nasolabial dermatitis, seborrheic dermatitis, rosacea, oily skin, stretch marks, hyperpigmentation, mouth ulcers and prematurely greying hair. Food sources include wholegrains, Brewer's yeast, avocado, chicken and beef.

### Magnesium

This is the anti stress mineral as it has a relaxing effect on smooth and skeletal muscles. If you have a twitch under your eye or suffer from leg cramps or menstrual cramps then you need some extra magnesium. Food sources include kelp, green leafy vegetables, hazelnuts, cashews and almonds.

### Zinc

Zinc is required as a coenzyme in over 100 metabolic pathways; it supports immune function and has a role in growth and development. You will see a deficiency as acne, white spots on fingernails, soft nails with corrugations, dandruff, hair loss, dermatitis, poor wound healing, stretch marks and a decreased ability to taste foods. Food sources include oysters, ginger, pine nuts, pecans and sunflower seeds.

### Vitamin C

The major function of vitamin C is the production of collagen, the basis for connective tissue. It is also a major anti oxidant, supports immune function and helps the body to detoxify from heavy metals. A deficiency can be seen in poor wound healing (think of acne), easy bruising, bleeding gums and muscle ache. Food sources include cherries, red chillies, kiwi fruit, parsley, red capsicum and Brussel sprouts.

### Essential fatty acids

These vital unsaturated fatty acids cannot be made in our bodies and must be supplied from the diet or supplemented. EFA's are structural components of cell membranes where they ensure fluidity and stability. They help to regulate moisture loss and protect the cell from injury and infection. They are also anti inflammatory via their activation on prostaglandin 1 series. A deficiency in EFA's can be seen in many clinical symptoms such as dry, flaky skin, dry, brittle hair and nails, hormone dependant acne (pimples on the cheeks and jaw line), goose pimple like bumps on the upper arms, dermatitis, psoriasis and pterigium. Food sources include oily fish, flax seed oil, hemp seed oil, chia seed oil and avocados.

### Iron

The haemoglobin found in iron carries oxygen to the cells for energy production. Iron is also required for collagen synthesis and is involved in skin and nail formation. Those more likely to be iron deficient are vegetarians, pregnant women and women with heavy periods. Iron deficiency is evident when there is skin pallor, pale conjunctiva, cold extremities, tiredness, dizziness, and dry, brittle hair and nails. Food sources include spirulina, raw cacao, molasses, pumpkin seeds and parsley.