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Clean Beauty 101: A Comprehensive Guide



If you've hopped on social media at all in the last couple of years, you may have noticed the push to green your beauty routine. It's a movement toward "clean beauty," but the definition is less straightforward than you may think.

What Is 'Clean' Beauty, Anyway?

It all depends on whom you ask. "The definition of 'clean beauty' is pretty nebulous," says Michele Farber, MD, a board-certified dermatologist with Schweiger Dermatology Group in Philadelphia. There are no strict guidelines on what can be called clean or natural, which makes it complicated for a [skin](#)-care consumer.

Because there's no formal guidance, it's up to you to decide what clean beauty means to you, and that will depend on what you're looking for. Clean beauty could mean:

- You're actively looking to minimize certain controversial chemicals in your skin care, including fragrance, preservatives like parabens and phthalates, and dyes, all of which can be irritating for skin. But this may mean that you are still using products that contain chemicals.
- You're looking to minimize your exposure to all chemicals. You might then opt for truly natural products, like using coconut oil as a body moisturizer.
- You're "cleaner" when it comes to certain products in your routine, like cleansers and soaps, but still use conventional acne products because you find these treat your skin problem better.

Is There Any Science Behind This Approach to Skin Care?

Concern is growing among consumers and professionals that many ingredients used in skin-care products may affect our health. As the Environmental Working Group (EWG) points out, people use about 10 personal-care products a day, amounting to 126 different ingredients.

EWG, an organization that funds research and advocates for more transparency for personal-care products, argues that most of the ingredients the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allows in these items have not been proved safe. They also note that more than 500 products available in the United States "contain ingredients banned from cosmetics in Japan, Canada, or the European Union." There's the concern that some of these may be carcinogenic or endocrine-disrupting, meaning they cause cancer or dysregulate your hormonal system.

Whether those claims are true remains unclear, though. "We live in an environment where there are tons of chemicals everywhere, and it's impossible to live a chemical-free life. Though I think it's good to try to limit the number of chemicals we're exposed to, with certain skin conditions, it's not always possible," says Rebecca Baxt, MD, a board-certified dermatologist in Paramus, New Jersey. For instance, if you like to

moisturize with plain coconut oil, that's fine — but if you're acne-prone, you shouldn't put this on your face.

Work with your dermatologist here. They can help you find the products and routine that will address your clean beauty preferences while working toward your treatment goals, says Dr. Farber.

Advantages of a Clean Skin-Care Routine

If you're using products that are free of the most common ingredients that cause skin to react — think fragrances, dyes, parabens, and phthalates — it may help your skin remain calmer, and you may experience fewer symptoms of irritation, like redness, burning, and flaking.

Disadvantages of a Clean Skin-Care Routine

This is something that dermatologists everywhere will warn you about: "Just because something is organic or natural doesn't mean it's good. It doesn't mean it's bad, either," says Dr. Baxt. "Organics still have a ton of ingredients, and I find they use a lot of scented oils, which people are often allergic to," she says. In short, you're not guaranteed happy, irritation-free skin just because you're using something labeled as natural or clean.

Also, it's entirely possible to take these efforts too far. Never make your own sunscreen, for example. The sunscreen you buy should be broad-spectrum, SPF 30 or higher, and water resistant, says the American Academy of Dermatology.

Ingredients to Use (and Ones to Avoid) in a Clean Skin-Care Routine

In general, this approach to personal care is about finding products *without* certain ingredients. More on that below, but these unwanted contents generally include fragrance, dyes, preservatives, parabens, and phthalates.

Ingredients to Opt For

You may want to seek out the following, commonly present in “clean” beauty products:

- Hyaluronic acid, glycerin, panthenol, ceramides (moisturizers)
- Zinc oxide and titanium dioxide (found in mineral-based sunscreens)
- Vitamin C (a protective antioxidant)
- Alpha hydroxy acids (glycolic acid for evening [skin](#) tone)
- Beta hydroxy acids (salicylic acid for acne)
- Bakuchiol (a retinol alternative, used to address fine lines and wrinkles)

If you’re looking to find out if one of your favorite products might be “clean,” look it up at the EWG’s [Skin](#) Deep Database.

Ingredients to Avoid

This is up to you, but for reference, Sephora does have a standard for what it considers “clean.” For ease of purchase, the personal-care company, which has brick-and-mortar stores and an online shop, awards products that meet its standards with a seal and has a separate section on their website where you can shop clean beauty. These products do not contain “parabens, sulfates SLS and SLES, phthalates, mineral oils, formaldehydes, formaldehyde-releasing agents, retinyl palmitate, oxybenzone, coal tar, hydroquinone, triclosan, and triclocarban.”

Though it’s not an official guideline, it can be a good place to start if you’re not sure where to begin your clean beauty routine.

Clean [Skin](#) Care Product Staples and Recommendations

Cleanse with micellar water. Try Simple Kind to [Skin](#) Micellar Cleansing Water, formulated to be exceptionally gentle on [skin](#). Simple’s micellar water leaves out artificial fragrance, color, dye, alcohol, parabens, and phthalates.

Use a mineral-based SPF moisturizer and sunscreen. Minerals like titanium dioxide or zinc oxide reflect rays and are not absorbed in the [skin](#).

They are considered the “cleaner” choice, says Farber. Coola Mineral Face Matte Tint SPF 30 has both titanium dioxide and zinc oxide for broad-spectrum protection.

Protect with an antioxidant serum. Farber recommends a vitamin C serum, which will offer antioxidants to counteract the harmful effects of free radicals — chemicals that cause [skin](#) aging, as research shows. Drunk Elephant is a beloved brand in the clean beauty space, and their C-Firma Vitamin C Day Serum contains pure L-ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and is suitable for oily, normal, and dry [skin](#).

Even tone with glycolic acid. You can find glycolic acid, an alpha hydroxy acid made from sugarcane, in creams and serums, an ingredient that encourages the dead [skin](#) layer on top to slough off to reduce the look of discoloration, says Farber.

Treat acne with salicylic acid. Salicylic acid, which comes from the bark of the willow tree, is a gold standard ingredient for addressing acne issues, and it's considered okay for clean beauty. It too works by exfoliating dead [skin](#) cells that plug up pores and can lead to blemishes, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

Smooth lines with bakuchiol. This is the newest natural retinol alternative. Retinol is a vitamin A derivative, and this ingredient exfoliates and stimulates collagen production to keep [skin](#) smooth and wrinkle-free, as Harvard University notes. Bakuchiol has been found to lessen wrinkles and diminish discolorations similarly to retinol, and causes less irritation, according to a study published in February 2019 in the *British Journal of Dermatology*.

Hydrate with a moisturizer. The main goal is to look for a simple moisturizer that contains as few ingredients as possible and is fragrance-free, says Farber. Common ingredients found in “clean” moisturizers include hyaluronic acid, glycerin, panthenol, and ceramides.

Morning and Night Steps to Follow in a Clean Beauty Routine

The ideal routine for everyone will look different — [skin](#) care isn't one-size-fits-all, says Farber. But one general principle, she says, is that less is more. One way to accomplish your goal of a clean beauty routine is to simply pare it down. By using fewer products, you'll reduce your exposure to a variety of ingredients and chemicals, including those that may be irritating your [skin](#). Here are the three steps you need in the morning and evening, according to Farber.

In the Morning

1. **Wash up, depending on your [skin](#) type.** If you're oily, then wash in the morning, says Farber. If you're dry or sensitive, a quick rinse of water is all you need.
2. **Blot on a vitamin C serum.**
3. **Slather on an SPF moisturizer** to safeguard [skin](#) from the sun.

In the Evening

1. **Start with a gentle cleanser.** To wash the dirt, grime, leftover makeup, and the day's pollution from your [skin](#).
2. **Treat [skin](#).** Now's the time to treat [skin](#) with your anti-acne product or a healthy-aging product like glycolic acid or bakuchiol.
3. **Moisturize again.** Before you go to bed, make sure [skin](#) is well hydrated. This should be a plain, fragrance-free moisturizer; no need to apply one with SPF at night.

A clean beauty routine involves products that contain certain ingredients and don't contain others.

Can You Sleep Your Way to Healthier, Brighter [Skin](#)?

The connection between ample, good-quality sleep and healthy [skin](#) is undeniable. Here are five strategies to maximize your snooze time for a healthier, more youthful complexion.



Getting a good night's rest is critical for your overall health and well-being, but it also turns out there's some scientific truth to the notion of beauty sleep. "Our [skin](#) rests and repairs itself while we sleep," says Francesca Fusco, MD, a dermatologist and assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai in New York City. "With no UV [ultraviolet] exposure and no dynamic facial muscles contracting, it's the best time of day for [skin](#)."

Dr. Anna Persaud, PhD, sleep expert and CEO of ThisWorks, a beauty and wellness product brand, agrees. "Overnight, [skin](#) goes into repair and restore mode, meaning it removes toxins, repairs cell and DNA damage caused by the environment, replaces aging cells, and creates new ones. That's why after good-quality sleep, [skin](#) looks fresher, younger, and more

radiant.” According to the National Sleep Foundation, adults need seven to nine hours of sleep per night.

If you try to cut down on the amount of sleep your body needs to function at its best, your [skin](#) will show it. “Then, overnight repair is compromised and we quickly see the impact of this, for example in the appearance of dark circles under our eyes, changes in [skin](#) texture, dry [skin](#), and the onset of fine lines and wrinkles,” adds Dr. Persaud.

And when you’re looking at the snooze-specific bodily functions, it’s important to keep in mind a few hormones produced, particularly cortisol. “Cortisol levels decrease while we sleep, so if you don’t sleep then cortisol levels will remain high,” says Joshua Zeichner, MD, head of clinical and cosmetic dermatology at Mount Sinai hospital in New York City. “This may interfere with wound healing, promote early aging, and even lead to acne flares.” A review published in June 2014 in the journal *Inflammation & Allergy Drug Targets* even suggested that elevated cortisol levels — that are directly associated with stress — can lead to a greater risk of the [skin](#) condition psoriasis and slow wound healing time by a whopping 20 percent.

Also important to note, says Dr. Zeichner, is that traditionally, “cell turnover and likely collagen production increases in the evening.” So by the same token, when sleep is compromised, so is cell turnover and collagen production, which helps [skin](#) feel firmer and the complexion to have a plumper, more youthful look. As past research has pointed out, collagen production decreases with age.

But there are ways to maximize your seven to nine hours of shut-eye to help your [skin](#) reach its healthiest — we turned to the experts to steal their secrets.

1. Reach for an Overnight Moisturizer With Hyaluronic Acid

It’s imperative to develop a [skin](#)-care routine that focuses on moisturizing and regenerating [skin](#). These aspects are integral to helping slow the signs

of aging, says Persaud. Hyaluronic acid, she says, “helps to bind water to [skin](#) cells.” Translation: This ingredient is the key to attaining a dewy, healthy glow.

Zeichner agrees, noting that the superstar ingredient “is a humectant, which means that it pulls in water to hydrate the [skin](#) — in fact, it can hold 1,000 times its weight in water.” That makes it a great ingredient to apply before bed, when your [skin](#) is at its driest.

2. Choose High-Thread-Count Cotton Sheets (or Splurge on Silk Pillowcases)

“It has been well documented that softer sheets may have [skin](#) aging benefits,” says Zeichner. “As the [skin](#) wraps against your sheets, there are frictional forces that may lead to folding and wrinkling of the [skin](#).” Although you have a wide range of sheets at your disposal, those with a thread count of 200 to 800 are considered good, with some occasionally topping 1,000. Rule of thumb: The higher, the better. And if you really want to splurge, try a silk pillowcase, which will provide the most slip between your [skin](#) and the bedding.

3. Use Products With Vitamin C or Vitamin A, Which Can Help Rev Collagen Production

“Vitamin C also helps supports collagen production, so try applying topically,” says Persaud, who also recommends taking a vitamin C supplement to help boost collagen levels as well. Vitamin C may be listed on your [skin](#)-care product ingredient label as one of the following: L-ascorbic acid, sodium ascorbyl phosphate, ascorbyl palmitate, or retinyl ascorbate.

As a plus, early studies suggest vitamin C’s antioxidant properties may help reverse any damage the sun has imposed on your [skin](#) during the day, notes the American Academy of Dermatology, making this ingredient a win all around.

Vitamin A, on the other hand, can help minimize pore size, clear acne-prone [skin](#), and firm dull, sagging [skin](#) by boosting collagen production, according to past research. Harvard Health Publishing notes that sunlight inactivates retinoids, increasing the [skin](#)'s sensitivity to harmful UV rays, so dermatologists agree using them at bedtime is best. The topical form of vitamin A is a retinoid, and you can find various retinoid creams with a prescription, at your local drugstore or wherever you like to buy your beauty products.

4. Place a Humidifier on Your Nightstand Before Hitting the Sack

There's no question that sleep can dry out [skin](#). "When we wake, our [skin](#) is at its most dehydrated. This is due to overnight transepidermal water loss," says Persaud. Transepidermal water loss happens when H2O evaporates from the [skin](#)'s surface, also known as the epidermis, per past research. While swilling water during the day is crucial for avoiding dehydration and optimizing your overall health, Dr. Fusco says the best way to mitigate losing any moisture from dry sleep spaces is to employ the aid of a humidifier.

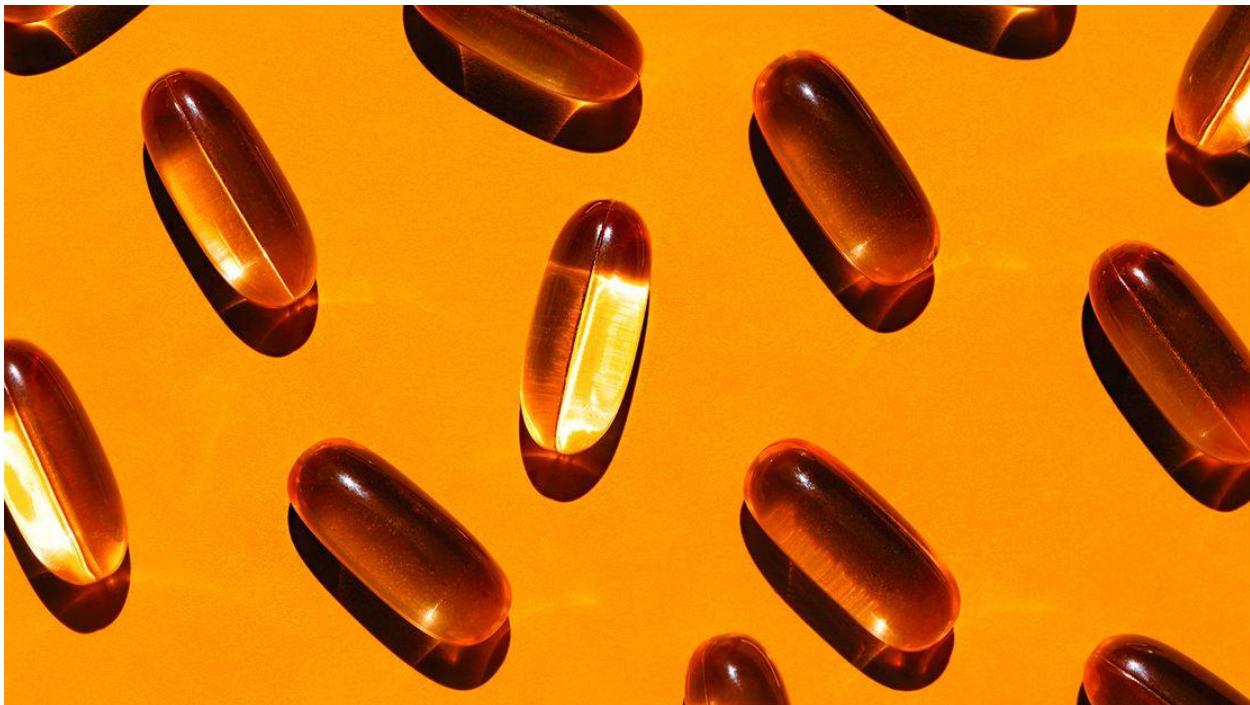
5. Sleep on Your Back, Not Your Side, if You Can Help It

Snoozing in this position prevents your face from rubbing up against the pillow, which can help keep your [skin](#) looking smooth. "For those who sleep on their front, fluid can pool, which can lead to temporary swelling, possibly emphasizing under eye bags," says Persaud. "People who sleep on their sides are likely to notice 'sleep lines' on the side that they sleep on."

But Fusco adds that "with the right pillow and elevation of the head, fluid accumulation and puffiness can be corrected."

What Are the Benefits of Fish Oil for Your Hair?

Eating more whole fish with omega-3 fatty acids may help strengthen your tresses, but there's limited evidence that fish oil pills will do the same.



One of the most exciting touted benefits of omega-3 fatty acids, abundantly found in fish oil, is that they can help you grow long, lustrous locks.

“Omega-3 fatty acids are not made in the body, so you need to eat foods that contain them or take a supplement,” says Lynne J. Goldberg, MD, the director of the hair clinic at Boston Medical Center in Massachusetts. Fish and seafood contain DHA and EPA, while plant-based foods such as walnuts and flaxseed contain alpha-linolenic acid, or ALA, a fraction of which is then converted into EPA and DHA, notes the National Institutes of Health. Proponents of omega-3s say that getting ample amounts in your diet can help feed follicles and grow hair.

Do Omega-3s Help With Hair Growth?

In terms of supplementation, there are few studies that look at omega-3 fatty acids and hair growth, and few that study fish oil in particular.

One small study in the February 2017 issue of the *Journal of Clinical and Aesthetic Dermatology* looked at 10 participants with androgenetic alopecia (known as male-pattern baldness, which can appear in men and women, notes MedlinePlus) who were each given a twice-daily supplement containing a mix of fish oil, flaxseed oil, antioxidants, and melatonin. After about six months, eight people (representing 80 percent of participants) had an increase in hair. It's important to remember, though, that this was a very small study and there was no placebo group.

An earlier study, with 120 participants, was published in 2015 in the *Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology*. It compared a group taking a supplement containing fish oil and vitamins C and E (among other ingredients) with a control group. After six months, 62 percent of those in the supplement group saw an increase in hair density compared with 28 percent in the control group. What's perhaps surprising is that more than half of the women in the control group said they noticed an increase in hair growth when comparing before and after photos of their scalp. "I really think we need more data and more research to understand the potential mechanism," says Dr. Goldberg, who was not involved with either study.

Supplements may contain fish oil or omega-3s along with other ingredients, like antioxidants. These ingredients may act synergistically together, so we shouldn't jump to the conclusion that taking fish oil or omega-3s alone in a supplement will grow hair.

As for topical application, a study published in September 2018 in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*, in which scientists applied a fermented mackerel oil topically to rodents' whiskers, found that the substance helped stimulate follicles, possibly by activating the "growth" phase of hair.

That's one study — and on rodents. Overall, "topical application of fish oil will not support hair growth or scalp health," says Kerry Yates, a trichologist and the founder of Colour Collective in Dallas. It also has a fishy smell, and the lingering odor is enough to deter some people from using pure fish oil on the scalp.

When it comes to hair growth, the most effective option is to eat a healthy diet, use gentle hair-care products, and seek treatment (start with your dermatologist) if you are losing hair, so any health conditions can be addressed, says Goldberg.

What Is the Best Form of Fish Oil?

There are many different ways you can get fish oil, including fish oil supplements, fish liver oil supplements (like cod liver oil), and shellfish and whole fish, according to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH). In terms of food, fatty or oily fish have the greatest amounts of omega-3s, such as salmon, sardines, mackerel, cod, herring, trout, and canned tuna, per the Mayo Clinic.

Fish like these provide a range of additional vitamins and minerals not found in supplements. To reap the potential benefits of fish oil, opt for whole fish over pills, registered dietitians recommend. If you are going to take a supplement for hair, [skin](#), or nails, choose one that uses small fish to limit mercury levels, says Debra Jaliman, MD, a board-certified dermatologist in New York City and the author of [Skin Rules](#). She likes Nordic Naturals, which uses fish oil from anchovies and sardines.

Is Fish Oil Good for Your Hair and Nails?

There's a lack of data showing the role of fish oil in hair and nail health. What's most important is that you're getting the omega-3s your body needs to function well all around. "Various vitamins [claiming] they can grow the hair will support any deficiencies you may have but will not guarantee hair growth," says Yates.

If you are well nourished and eat a balanced diet, Goldberg says it's unlikely you are deficient in omega-3s. "And, if you don't have a deficiency, then it's unclear whether taking more omega 3s than you need through a supplement will help," says Goldberg.

Does Cod Liver Oil Cause Hair Loss?

There are no studies that show that cod liver oil causes hair loss — there is no research establishing a relationship between cod liver oil and tress health in general. But an excess of certain vitamins, such as vitamin A, may worsen hair loss, according to research published in the journal *Dermatology Practical & Conceptual* in January 2017. Cod liver oil contains EPA and DHA, as well as vitamins A and D, says the NCCIH. The organization warns that the amounts of these two vitamins vary from product to product. Some supplements may contain too much vitamin A, which may cause a problem for your health and your hair. It's important to choose supplements from high-quality brands that your healthcare team has cleared.

What Is Face Yoga? Plus, 5 Exercises to Try at Home

Just like going to the gym keeps your body in shape, these yoga-inspired exercises are said to tone the muscles on your face to help keep you looking young.



You know that exercise keeps you looking and feeling your best. But can extending workouts to your face have similar effects?

Possibly. That's the idea behind face yoga, a growing trend that claims to deliver [skin](#)-lifting effects without surgery, needles, or even expensive [skin](#)-care products. While many people have been shelving their usual facials and procedures in favor of staying home and minimizing their risk of

contracting COVID-19, some have turned to face yoga as a DIY approach to younger-looking [skin](#).

What Is Face Yoga?

First things first: Face yoga doesn't involve the usual shavasana or Downward-Facing Dog poses you're familiar with from your yoga practice. "Yoga" is just a catchy way to say facial exercises that move the muscles on your face into certain positions — kind of like yoga for your body. The idea is that performing these exercises will keep your face looking toned and young, lifting areas that are sagging and drooping, and trimming years from your visage.

"The aim is to create a moment of self-care where you improve blood circulation for a healthy glow and reduce stress and tension in your face," says Elsa Jungman, PhD, a scientist, microbiome expert, and proponent of facial yoga based in San Francisco.

Most people hold tension in their faces, whether through facial expressions or too much time in front of a screen. "All these daily activities cause patterns in how we use our face and the specific muscles we recruit," Dr. Jungman says. "This is why we want to focus more on releasing and softening our faces to let go of these patterns and any held facial tension."

Touted Benefits of Face Yoga

Facial yoga is said to help counter those effects. According to two popular programs, Happy Face Yoga and Face Yoga Method, face yoga helps to:

- Release tension, which can minimize the appearance of stress lines
- Strengthen and tone facial muscles to ultimately widen eyes, raise cheeks, and firm up the jawline
- Increase circulation and blood flow to the [skin](#), which makes the [skin](#) glow

- Smooth fine lines and wrinkles
- Counter the effects of gravity
- Reduce the appearance of scars

Some dermatologists say there's some truth to these claims. "The goal of face yoga is to increase the blood and oxygen supply to your [skin](#), which improves the life of the cell," says Deborah Longwill, DO, a board-certified dermatologist at Miami Center for Dermatology in Florida and cofounder of Doctor's Daughter [Skin](#)care. "This leads to glowing and rejuvenated [skin](#)."

Lucy Chen, MD, a board-certified dermatologist with Riverchase Dermatology in Miami, also says you could reduce visible signs of aging by toning the muscles through specific facial exercise training.

It should be noted, though, that there isn't much research about facial yoga or facial exercises. The most promising and most-often-cited support comes from research published in March 2018 in *JAMA Dermatology*. In the study, a group of participants ages 40 to 65 performed facial exercises for 30 minutes a day for eight weeks. Then for 12 more weeks, they practiced the exercises three to four times per week. At the end of the 20 weeks, the study participants saw improved upper and lower cheek fullness. They also looked younger at the end of the study, with two dermatologists estimating the participants' average age was 50.8 years old at the start of the study and 48.1 years 20 weeks later.

You shouldn't expect drastic changes, though. The *JAMA Dermatology* study authors noted that their participant sample was small and the results were modest. And keep in mind that face exercises won't alter the texture of your [skin](#), according to Harvard Health, though moving and stretching scarred [skin](#) through face yoga can lessen the appearance of scars.

Potential Risks of Face Yoga

Leaning on face yoga as your go-to anti-aging regimen may backfire, too. Some experts say contorting your face in these ways can actually lead to *more* wrinkles.

“Many facial wrinkles — for example, crow’s-feet, laugh lines, and forehead wrinkles — result from repetitive facial muscle activity such as frowning or smiling,” Dr. Chen says. “Some question whether routinely pulling your face and exercising those muscles could create wrinkles and fine lines.”

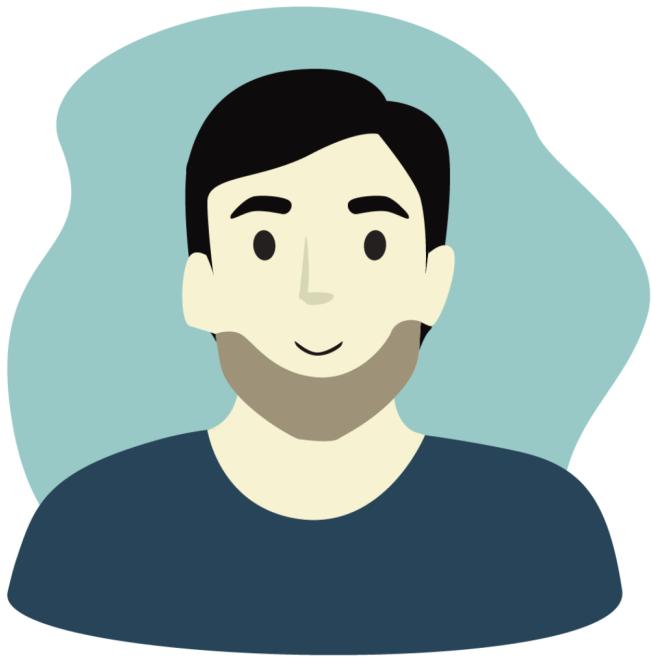
Think of Botox, which works by “freezing” the muscles in the face in order to minimize the appearance of wrinkles. With face yoga, you’re doing just the opposite, and if done too aggressively or incorrectly, Chen says facial yoga may actually accelerate signs of aging.

Not to mention, sweaty hands carry dirt, oil, and bacteria that can clog pores and cause breakouts. In fact, the American Academy of Dermatology Association recommends not touching your face to help prevent acne.

5 Face Yoga Exercises to Try at Home

Want to give it a try? Here are five exercises used in the *JAMA Dermatology* study. Jungman recommends practicing for five to 10 minutes each day to start, eventually working your way up to 15 to 20 minutes per day as part of your [skin](#)-care routine and self-care practice.

1. The Cheek Lifter



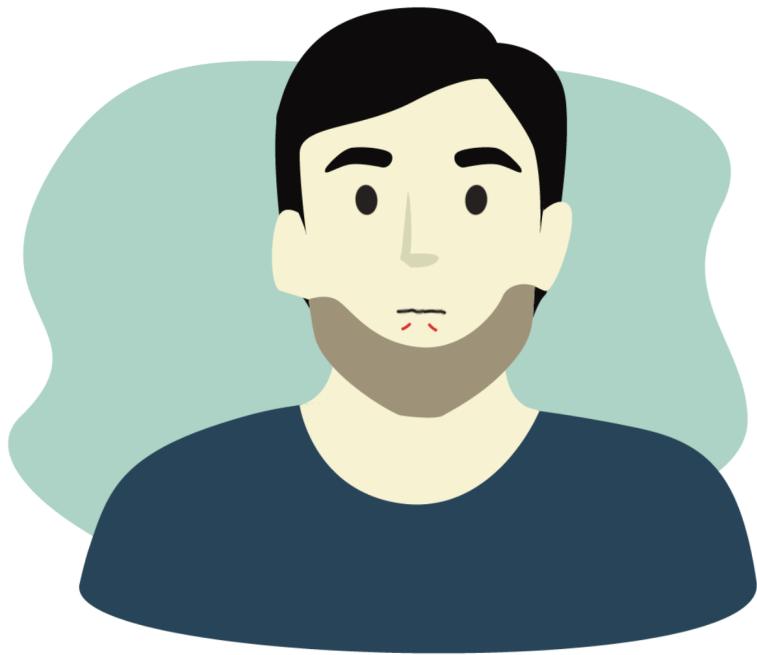
Open your mouth and form an O. Position your upper lip over your teeth and smile to lift cheek muscles up. Place your index fingers lightly on top of your cheek muscles, directly under your eyes. Release cheek muscles to lower them. Then smile again, thinking about pushing the muscles up toward your eyes. Repeat by lowering and lifting the cheeks 10 times. On the 10th time, hold your muscles up as high as you can and hold for 20 seconds. Repeat three times.

2. Happy Cheeks Sculpting



Smile without showing your teeth and roll your lips out as if trying to show as much lip as possible. Try to smile with the corners of your mouth so you feel a slight burn in the corners of your mouth. Press your index fingers into the corners of your mouth and slide the fingers up to your cheekbones as you press into the muscle. Lift the muscle up to the cheekbones, toward the corners of your eyes. When you get to the top of your cheekbones, hold for 20 seconds and feel the muscles tightening in your cheeks. Keep smiling with the corners of your mouth as you do this. Repeat three times.

3. The Eyebrow Lifter



Press three fingertips under each of your eyebrows to force your eyes open. Smile as you try to lower your eyebrows against your fingers. Hold. Then close your eyes and roll your eyeballs toward the top of your head. Hold for 20 seconds and keep smiling. Release and repeat three times.

4. Jaw and Neck Firmer



Open your mouth and make an “aah” sound. Fold your lower lip and the corners of your lips into your mouth and hold tightly as you extend your lower jaw forward. Using your lower jaw, scoop up slowly as you close your mouth, pulling your chin up about 1 inch each time you scoop and tilting your head backward. Open and close your lower jaw 10 times. On the 10th scoop, your chin should be pointing to the ceiling. Hold this position for 20 seconds and think about the sides of your face lifting. Repeat three times.

5. Temple Developer



Press your fingertips into your temples as you close your jaw, clenching your teeth together and tilting your chin up. Clench your teeth and concentrate on the temple region, thinking about trying to move your ears backward. Hold for 10 seconds, then clench your back teeth down and hold for 10 seconds. Your temple muscles should flex with each clench. Relax and then repeat three times.

7 Easy Home Hacks for Healthy [Skin](#)

For your best complexion, look beyond stocking your vanity with [skin](#)-care products and invite healthy-[skin](#) habits into your daily life.



Is your home optimized for healthy [skin](#)?

Guille Faingold/Stocksy

A good [skin](#)-care routine isn't only about which serums and moisturizers you choose to apply — establishing good habits at home is an equally crucial step. And with many people spending more time at home than ever before during the COVID-19 pandemic, now is the perfect time to assess your environment and make improvements where you can.

Here are seven home hacks that may help promote healthy [skin](#).

Add a Humidifier to Help Keep [Skin](#) Moisturized



Dryness is your [skin](#)'s worst enemy. "When the [skin](#) lacks proper hydration, it triggers various reactions, one of them being more oil production and more breakouts," says Annie Gonzalez, MD, a board-certified dermatologist with Riverchase Dermatology in Miami. This is exacerbated in winter months due to dropping humidity levels outside and artificial heat pumping through your house. Your move: Add a humidifier to introduce moisture back into the air.

Anna H. Chacon, MD, a board-certified dermatologist based in Miami, who serves on the advisory board for Smart Style Today, says humidifiers can be especially useful for those suffering from dry [skin](#) or eczema.

A review published in the *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology* in February 2016 linked low temperatures and low humidity levels with a less effective [skin](#) barrier and [skin](#) that's more prone to irritants and allergens. And a small study published in July 2019 in *Skin Research and Technology* found sleeping in environments with humidity levels below 30 percent decreased [skin](#) hydration by nearly 25 percent.

That's why it's a good idea to set up a humidifier in your bedroom, and consider investing in a second for your work-from-home space if that's where you're spending most of your time. Set humidity levels to between 30 to 50 percent, Dr. Gonzalez suggests.

Switch Your Pillowcase to Silk



Can a simple pillowcase swap help your [skin](#)? Probably — depending on your go-to sleeping position. “Silk pillowcases can be incredibly helpful in preventing wrinkles for anyone who sleeps on their stomach or side,” Gonzalez says. “When one side of the face is squished against a pillow for eight hours a night, that side is more prone to developing wrinkles than the other.” Plus, Gonzalez says, silk isn’t as drying as cotton and won’t draw moisture out of the [skin](#) while you’re clocking those zzz’s.

There’s not much research to support these claims, so Gonzalez says not to rely on your pillowcase as your only anti-aging solution. But it won’t cause any harm either. And while you’re at it, make sure you’re keeping

your pillowcases clean. Deborah Longwill, MD, a board-certified dermatologist at Miami Center for Dermatology in Miami and cofounder of Doctor's Daughter [Skin](#)care, suggests washing pillowcases once a week and pillows once a month in a detergent meant for sensitive [skin](#). "The fewer chemicals, the better," she says.

Set Up Your Bedroom for Good Sleep



Logging a solid night of sleep doesn't just leave you feeling refreshed — it'll benefit your [skin](#), too. "Poor or insufficient sleep can show on the face, resulting in hanging eyelids, swollen eyes, dark circles, pale [skin](#), more wrinkles, and droopy [skin](#)," Gonzalez says. Just like the body needs sleep to restore itself, the [skin](#) needs it too. "During sleep, blood flow to the [skin](#) increases, rebuilding collagen and repairing UV exposure damage to reduce wrinkles and age spots," Gonzalez says.

A study published in January 2015 in *Clinical and Experimental Dermatology* involving 60 participants found that good sleepers — defined as those who logged seven to nine hours of quality sleep per night — had

lower [skin](#)-aging scores compared with poor sleepers. The good sleepers were also more satisfied with their own appearance and attractiveness.

So what can you do to prioritize sleep? The National Sleep Foundation recommends setting the thermostat to between 60 and 67 degrees, dimming the lights about an hour before bedtime, and investing in a mattress, sheets, and pillow that you find most comfortable. Switching off electronic devices well before bedtime can also help you get quality slumber. A randomized controlled trial published in January 2018 in the *Journal of Psychiatric Research* found that participants who wore amber-colored glasses two hours before bedtime for one week saw greater improvements in insomnia symptoms than those who wore clear-colored glasses. Researchers write that blue light from devices, like your computer, can suppress production of melatonin, a hormone that promotes sleep.

Stock Your Fridge With [Skin](#)-Healthy Foods



Cappi Thompson/Getty Images

Ever notice an uptick in breakouts after you've eaten junk food? According to the Mayo Clinic, foods high in refined carbohydrates, such as bread and chips, can worsen [skin](#) conditions, including acne. What's more, certain nutrients can actually promote healthy [skin](#), such as fatty acids, vitamin C, and probiotics.

"Essential fatty acids like omega-3s and omega-6s are the foundation of healthy cells," Gonzalez says. "These fats help produce the [skin](#)'s natural oil barrier, which is fundamental in keeping [skin](#) looking young and feeling hydrated." Being low in omega-3 fats, on the other hand, can lead to rough, scaly [skin](#), according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NIH recommends adult men take in 1.6 grams (g) of omega-3s per day, while women should get 1.1 g per day of the nutrient, which can be found in foods like walnuts, chia seeds, and salmon.

Gonzalez also recommends vitamin C, which is found in citrus fruits and parsley. It's a key antioxidant that keeps the [skin](#) healthy whether ingested orally or applied topically, according to a July 2012 review published in *Dermato Endocrinology*. Gonzalez says it can increase collagen production and fight free radical damage through its antioxidant properties.

Finally, probiotics, which are found in yogurt, are a worthy addition to your [skin](#)-care routine. Probiotics are well known for their positive impact on the immune system and the gut, and they also can help with acne, rosacea, atopic dermatitis, and photoaging, which manifests on the [skin](#) as wrinkles, according to a June 2015 article published in the *International Journal of Women's Dermatology*. "Probiotics help maintain your microbiome, which helps with the texture and barrier of the [skin](#)," Dr. Longwill says. "Maintaining a healthy microbiome also leaves you with healthy, glowing [skin](#)."

Turn to Supplements for Potential [Skin](#) Perks



Supplements may also help you source key vitamins that have been linked to [skin](#) benefits.

Vitamin E supplements — at 400 international units per day (IU) — have been shown to improve symptoms and quality of life for people with eczema, according to a November 2015 study published in the *Journal of Research in Medical Sciences*.

Gonzalez recommends a vitamin A supplement if you're struggling with signs of aging or dullness, and a vitamin B supplement if hyperpigmentation and acne are your primary concerns. "Vitamin A supports collagen growth, keeping the [skin](#) plump and robust, while vitamin B promotes cell turnover and controls sebum production," she says.

The benefits of incorporating vitamin A into your diet are well known, though the supplement benefits aren't as clear, according to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. But if it's the collagen growth you're after, consider collagen supplements, which have become an increasingly popular way to tap into the [skin](#) benefits of the protein. A review published

in January 2019 in *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology* found promising results that collagen supplements can help with wound healing and [skin](#) aging. The researchers report the collagen supplements increased [skin](#) elasticity, hydration, and collagen density. Plus, they're safe and don't come with any notable downsides.

Chacon also recommends taking niacin (vitamin B3). "Oral nicotinamide at 500 milligrams two times a day is known to hinder the development of [skin](#) cancers," she says. An August 2015 study published in *American Health & Drug Benefits* found following this regimen for one year decreased the rate of new squamous cell and basal cell [skin](#) cancers by nearly 25 percent among patients at a high risk for [skin](#) cancer.

Just be sure to check with a doctor first before you start a supplement regimen.

Light Aromatherapy Candles for Stress Relief



Hair?

6Helin Loik-Tomson/iStock

Oftentimes the stress you're feeling as a result of a fast-approaching work deadline, family drama, or anxiety about the future is written on your face. Blame your hormones. "Stress plays a big role in the [skin](#)'s health and appearance due to the hormone cortisol that is released," Gonzalez says. "Cortisol prompts the glands in the [skin](#) to produce more oil, leaving it more prone to acne and other problems." And if the stress sticks around and becomes chronic, it can suppress your immune system, leading to more [skin](#) infections and worse allergic reactions, according to a June 2014 study published in *Inflammation & Allergy Drug Targets*.

"Not to mention, in times of total stress, it can be easy to neglect [skin](#)-care routines or skip them altogether," Gonzalez says. "Finding ways to de-stress will have positive effects on the [skin](#) and overall mental health and well-being." De-stressing may sound easier said than done, but there are some simple tweaks you can make around the house to promote a calmer atmosphere. Here's an easy one: Light a candle that's infused with a scent that'll induce relaxation, such as lavender. According to the Cleveland Clinic, aromatherapy — and lavender in particular — can reduce your anxiety and put you in a better mood.

Make Water Part of Your Daily Routine



Chatchawarn Wongsatharn/Getty Images

The cheapest route to glowing [skin](#)? Drinking more water. “As a vital organ, the [skin](#) needs proper hydration from the inside out to maximize resiliency and prevent wrinkling,” Gonzalez says. An August 2015 study published in *Clinical, Cosmetic and Investigational Dermatology* involving 49 women found drinking an extra 2,000 milliliters (ml) — about 8 cups — of water each day positively impacted the [skin](#), especially for those who weren’t used to drinking much water.

To up your water consumption, Gonzalez suggests making it a habit to drink a glass of water every time you get up to use the bathroom. “This will set up a great cycle, as the more water you drink, the more you will have to go to the bathroom,” she says.

20 Ways to Preserve — and Boost — Collagen in Your Face

More collagen means fewer wrinkles and smooth, lifted [skin](#). Here are the topical products, in-office treatments, and lifestyle habits to practice for a healthier-looking complexion now.



In search of smooth [skin](#), you'll hear a lot of chatter about "boosting collagen," but what does that mean exactly? "Collagen is the main structural protein in the [skin](#), which acts like scaffolding and provides volume so the [skin](#) is smooth and wrinkle-free," explains Jennifer Chwalek, MD, board-certified dermatologist at Union Square Laser Dermatology in New York City.

Environmental factors like sun exposure and pollution can break down collagen, making it more likely you'll see wrinkles staring back at you in the mirror, says New York City–based board-certified dermatologist Marisa Garshick, MD. Age is a major factor, too. "As you get older, collagen production decreases so the [skin](#) can also appear thinner and have less structural support, which is why people begin to notice drooping or sagging of their [skin](#)," she says.

Collagen loss begins in the early twenties, says Dr. Garshick, making it important to both preserve the collagen you have — and stimulate your [skin](#) to produce it faster. Here are 20 smart ways to do just that:

1. Add Retinoids, the Gold-Standard Topical, to Your Routine

Retinoid/retinol are vitamin A derivatives that upregulate genes involved in collagen production. “Research shows an improvement in facial wrinkles after applying retinol for 12 weeks,” says Chwalek, referring to a study published in March 2016 in the *Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology*.

2. Try Bakuchiol if Retinoids Are Too Harsh

Bakuchiol is a natural alternative to a retinol/retinoid, and is thought to similarly stimulate [skin](#) cell turnover to rev collagen production with less of a risk of irritation, according to a study published in June 2018 in the *British Journal of Dermatology*. “This may be particularly good for people with sensitive [skin](#),” Dr. Garshick says.

3. Protect Collagen With Topical Vitamin C

Slather on a vitamin C serum in the morning. The vitamin is an antioxidant that protects the collagen in your [skin](#) against UV damage, says Chwalek. More than that, she says, it triggers collagen formation and stabilizes the collagen proteins in [skin](#).

4. Pack in Peptides

Peptides are a short chain of amino acids that serve as the building blocks of proteins, according to Paula’s Choice. Products with peptides, Garshick says, “have been shown to help promote collagen and elastin in the [skin](#),

improving firmness.” (Indeed, past research establishes this collagen-boosting effect!)

5. Slather on Sunscreen Every Morning

Sunscreen is vital for [skin](#) cancer prevention — but also for keeping [skin](#) young and springy. “UV exposure can lead to the breakdown of collagen, which can lead to the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, so you’re never too young to start wearing sunscreen regularly,” says Garshick. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends choosing a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher.

6. Then Reapply Sunscreen Throughout the Day

Sunscreen lasts for two hours, says Garshick. “While making sunscreen a part of your daily routine is essential, it’s also important to reapply throughout the day, especially on days with extended sun exposure,” she says. Check the label on your product; reapplication recommendations vary, though the [Skin](#) Cancer Foundation recommends doing so every two hours.

7. And Don’t Forget Below Your Chin

In your collagen-preserving sunscreen routine, don’t forget your neck, chest, and the back of your hands, says Garshick: “These areas can see the effects of cumulative sun damage, as the [skin](#) in these areas is thinner and therefore more likely to show the effects of aging,” she says.

8. Consider Taking Collagen Supplements

There are various collagen supplements available, including powders that you can mix into coffee and smoothies. While more studies are needed, says Garshick, she points to a January 2019 study in the *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology* that notes that preliminary research shows that these

supplements help increase [skin](#) elasticity, hydration, and the density of collagen within [skin](#).

9. Add Lean Protein to Your Plate

Eat a balanced diet that includes an adequate amount of protein.

“High-protein foods contain amino acids that are critical for collagen synthesis,” says Garshick. Lean protein sources include fish, seafood, [skinless](#) chicken breast, and lean cuts of beef and pork.

10. Limit Your Added Sugar Intake

A diet rich in sugar promotes the formation of advanced glycation end products (aptly called AGEs) that break down collagen, says Chwalek. Limit sugar consumption by reading the back of food labels and looking at either the “added sugar” line in the nutrition label or reading the ingredient list.

11. Load Up on Produce

There are many benefits to filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables, including preventing heart disease, stroke, and cancer, as Harvard University calls out. Add [skin](#) health to that list: “Eating a diet rich in antioxidants [via fruits and vegetables], can help to ward off free radical damage that degrades collagen,” says Chwalek.

12. Wear a Hat to Block the Sun’s Rays

A wide-brimmed hat will shield your face, scalp, and neck from damaging rays from the sun, according to the [Skin](#) Cancer Foundation. Choose a hat that has at least a 3-inch brim made with a tightly woven material.

13. Sport Shades to Protect Around Your Eyes

To discourage crow's feet from forming, wear sunglasses. Wraparound shades stop UV rays from sneaking in around the sides. The good news is that even cheap sunglasses will protect against both UVA and UVB rays, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

14. Don't Smoke — And Stop if You Do

Smoking cigarettes ages your [skin](#) in a variety of ways. "Smoking decreases blood flow and oxygen to the [skin](#). It also creates toxic free radicals that damage collagen and elastin fibers, and sop up antioxidants in the [skin](#)," says Chwalek. Ultimately, this speeds up wrinkle formation, and past research shows the habit ages your [skin](#) faster.

15. Consider a Chemical Peel

There are many options for in-office anti-aging procedures, including a chemical peel. These use hydroxy acids (like glycolic acid) to boost [skin](#) cell turnover, which in turn stimulates collagen production, says Garshick. Patients "see immediate benefits from chemical peels, as they can help with tone, texture, and the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles," she says.

16. Ask Your Dermatologist About Other In-Office Treatments

Ask your dermatologist if you are a good candidate for a resurfacing laser, radiofrequency treatment, microneedling, IPL (intense pulsed light), Juvederm/Restylane, or Radiesse. "These treatments work by stimulating collagen production and can help treat the visible signs of aging. Patients notice their [skin](#) looks more even and smoother over time," says Chwalek.

17. Focus on De-Stressing Strategies

Stress causes inflammation and weakens the body's ability to repair itself, speeding up [skin](#) aging, prior research shows. Maintain a list of de-stressing strategies to have at the ready for when life gets overwhelming.

18. Keep Moving

Physical activity keeps your body, mind, and [skin](#) young. "Exercise is another important factor in slowing the aging process," says Chwalek. What's more, staying active is a bona fide way to bust stress, the Mayo Clinic notes.

19. Cut Back on Booze

Alcohol impairs [skin](#)'s ability to produce collagen, as well as its natural antioxidant defense system (making it more vulnerable to damage), according to findings published in an August 2019 survey in *The Journal of Clinical and Aesthetic Dermatology*. People who drink eight or more drinks per week are more likely to have lines and wrinkles.

20. Get Your Beauty Rest

While more research in humans is needed, maintaining a regular sleep schedule may help with collagen renewal, research on mice in *Nature Cell Biology* in January 2020 suggests. The National Sleep Foundation recommends adults log 7 to 9 hours of (literal) beauty sleep per night.