

What's Healthy Skin?

Did you know that your skin is the largest organ of your body? Covering you from head to toe, the skin is one of the fundamental parts of your body's defense system, which protects you from bacteria, dirt and other foreign objects and the ultraviolet rays of the sun, and contains the nerve endings that let you know if something is hot or cold, soft or hard, sharp or dull. Your skin also plays an important role in regulating your body's fluids and temperature. Remember that clean and healthy skin means a healthy body and a happier you.

Below the smooth, hairy outer skin, or epidermis, that we see every day is a thick, strong and elastic layer of tissue known as the dermis. The dermis is richly supplied with blood vessels, sweat and oil glands, and nerve endings.

Healthy skin is smooth, with no breaks in the surface. It is warm (not hot or red) and neither dry and flaky nor moist and wrinkled. Healthy skin is a mirror of a healthy body. Hygiene goes beyond the simple task of making sure you don't smell bad when you go out in the street. Proper hygiene means keeping clean the largest organ in your body and also the most exposed to the hazards of this world. Here's a list featuring simple tips for your daily hygiene:

How to Take Care of Your Skin

To keep your skin healthy, eat a well-balanced diet that includes plenty of protein foods, fruits and vegetables (fresh if possible) and liquids. If you have a skin problem, such as a pressure sore or a healing surgical incision, you should increase your intake of protein (lean meats, dairy foods and legumes), carbohydrates (breads, cereals), vitamins A, C and E, and zinc. Extra iron may be needed if you are anemic (see "Anemia" paragraph, right).

The skin is served by a large number of blood vessels, and adequate circulation is needed to maintain skin health. You can help ensure a healthy blood supply by considering the following suggestions:

Smoking

DON'T! Nicotine in cigarettes causes blood vessels to get small (constrict) and prevents blood, oxygen and nutrients from flowing to the body tissues.

Edema

or swelling caused by fluid collecting in the tissues, usually occurs in a part of the body that is not moved frequently and is below the level of the heart (i.e., the feet, legs and hands). Skin over areas of edema becomes thin and pale and injures easily because of poor circulation. Edema can be prevented by elevating your legs and hands frequently, performing regular Range of Motion (ROM) exercises and wearing compressive stockings.

Anemia

(a decrease in red blood cells). Oxygen is essential for skin health, and is carried by red blood cells. A decrease in their number means less oxygen gets to the skin, which means that skin cells may become unhealthy or even die. Anemia should be evaluated and treated by your health care provider.

Vascular Disease

or a narrowing of the blood vessels, can be caused by diabetes, smoking, high blood pressure or elevated cholesterol. The result is decreased blood flow to the skin. Work closely with your health care provider to manage conditions that can lead to vascular disease and cause skin problems.

Skin Care Hints

As many people may know, the best skin care products are based on Aloe Vera. That kind of remedy has been used since the ancient times and its positive effects are well-known and documented. A long time ago herbalists have discovered that fresh juice of Aloe Vera can soothe and cure burns and other skin lesions easily. The vast variety of minerals, vitamins and amino acids contained by the plant makes it perfect for treating various skin problems.

Of course, Aloe Vera is the darling of the skin care market. Well-known skin care products and systems contain generous amounts of Aloe Vera juice. **The ClearPores System**, for instance, uses the powerful Salicylic Acid to clear acne and Aloe Vera to soothe the skin, help it close the distended pores and heal the lesions. The System is designed to take full advantage of the plant's healing properties and treat acne. This is just one example, albeit a very good one, of the many uses of Aloe Vera.