



THE DOCTOR'S PRESCRIPTION FOR

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Practical Insights into the World of Natural Healing

Beauty from the Inside Out

Even if you think you've been doing everything right for your health, you may still see unsightly reminders when you look in the mirror that something about your health is amiss. You may not be able to put your finger on it. But whether your reflection screams at you with red splotches, dark circles under the eyes, flaking skin, a sallow complexion, or thinning, straw-like hair, you know, just know, something isn't right – and that what isn't right may have something to do with your overall health or nutritional program.

Evening Primrose and Flax: Beautifying Oils for Great Skin

Since your skin, hair, and nails are the windows to your health, telling you when you are in great shape or when you are in trouble, it's good to question your health or nutritional program based on these indicators. Many women have felt frustrated after trying to do all the right things and still not getting the results they want. They've cut out their carbohydrates, sweets, and fat; they regularly apply sunscreen; and they even supplement with vitamins and minerals, including extra calcium.

But many of the health and hormonal problems women face could be due to cutting out not only the "bad" but also the "good" fats from their diet. When you cut out all fats, problems show up rather quickly in your skin, hair, and nails.

The road to damaged skin, hair, and nails, in other words, is paved with good intentions. Fat-free diets are the number one damaging "good intention" that can lead to unhealthy skin, hair, and nails.

Your body desperately requires fats – the proper fats – for ultimate skin beauty, especially as you age. But too many women have cut out all fats and that's dangerous to their health and beauty quest. Not surprisingly, about one in ten people suffers from unflattering skin problems, including skin that is itchy, very dry, red, and/or scaly.

Younger women seem to be experiencing the greatest problems, say experts. These are the Generation Y women who are now coming of age. Some are so concerned with body image that they resist consuming almost all fat, complex

carbohydrates, and protein. Nutritionists say that Generation Y women are surviving on iceberg lettuce, fat-free yogurt, diet sodas, nonfat salad dressing, nonfat cookies, white rice, and even fat-free chips. Their bodies are crying out for the good fats that promote beauty and hormonal balance, as well as the fat-soluble vitamins their bodies cannot absorb without adequate fat. They don't seem to recognize that fat-soluble vitamins such as A, D, and E are beneficial to healthy skin, nails, hair, and immunity.

Women certainly don't need excess amounts of bad fats – namely saturated fats, trans-fats from partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, or other types of highly processed fats used to flavor and texturize prepared and fast foods found in supermarkets and fast food outlets. Yet, there is no question any longer that essential fatty acids, obtained from both the Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acid families, are absolutely critical to women's beauty. Women who consume the beautifying oils daily enjoy fresh clear skin, strong nails, and thick hair.

Skin Requires a Constant Supply of Essential Fatty Acids

Beautiful skin, free from redness, dryness, scaling, and swelling, requires the proper fats in order to maintain the correct balance of a family of chemical messengers called prostaglandins. Prostaglandins, which strongly influence skin health, are the body's chemical messengers, governing many processes, including inflammation. They are not stored in the body; instead they must be constantly synthesized from essential fatty acids (EFAs) taken in from the diet.

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The best dietary sources of EFAs include flax seed oil, select types of fish, and evening primrose oil. While flax seed oil and select types of fish (e.g., wild salmon, mackerel and trout) supply Omega 3 fatty acids, evening primrose oil is one of nature's richest sources of an even rarer fatty acid: the Omega 6 fat called gamma-linolenic acid (GLA).

The exceptionally high GLA content of evening primrose oil makes it beneficial to skin health. Why? Because unlike any of the EFAs which require two key enzymes for metabolism and utilization that are not present in the skin – 6 desaturase and 5 desaturase – GLA is already in a body-ready form. The skin doesn't require either of these enzymes to convert GLA into favorable compounds required for moderating inflammation.

If the body is lacking GLA, the skin is required to form it from precursor compounds provided by the liver, and then depends on the blood for transport to the skin. Although the body can convert linolenic acid (LA) into GLA, it may be more beneficial to provide a constant supply of already-formed GLA from evening primrose oil. That's because the body's capacity to convert LA to GLA decreases with age, and this may increase the body's dietary requirements. Additionally, the activity of 6 desaturase is inhibited by many environmental influences, such as diet, stress, and aging.

The consequences of an EFA deficiency can be devastating to the skin. When the body lacks GLA, prostaglandins become imbalanced and skin problems such as dryness, itching, scaling,

and thinning result. What's more, nails may crack, and hair will become discolored and thin.

Flax and Evening Primrose Oils Work Better Together

Both evening primrose and flax oils are available separately, and your health food store or natural products supermarket will carry many quality brands. However, you may be able to achieve better results from a formula that combines flax and evening primrose oils. In fact, research from the Department of Dermatology, School of Medicine, University of California, Davis, shows that the flax-evening primrose oil combination may be particularly beneficial in supporting moist, healthy skin. Both GLA and EPA – a major polyunsaturated fatty acid found in fish oil, which the body also produces from the raw materials in flax oil – are potent inhibitors of the chemical leukotriene B4, which is known to contribute to skin inflammation. Another reason for using flax and evening primrose oils together is that under the influence of Omega 3 oils, such as EPA and DHA, the body is far more likely to convert GLA to favorable prostaglandins.

Flax's Omega 3 fatty acids also inhibit the body's production of inflammation-causing arachidonic acid, which is usually found in animal foods along with saturated fat. By doing so, flax favorably inhibits the body's conversion of arachidonic acid to pro-inflammatory prostaglandins.

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Clinical Studies Say Yes to Evening Primrose Oil

All of this favorable metabolic activity results in beautiful skin. Not surprisingly, clinical studies strongly support the use of evening primrose oil for supporting healthy skin in both adults and children. Let's look at a few of these studies:

- ✓ In a double-blind trial conducted by researchers associated with the Department of Physiology, University of Turku, Finland, patients with inflamed skin received either oral evening primrose oil or placebo for 12 weeks. In the evening primrose oil group, a statistically significant improvement was observed in the overall severity and grade of inflammation and in the percentage of the body surface affected by inflammation, as well as in dryness and itch.
- ✓ In a study conducted by researchers at the Nutrition Research Center, University of Bologna, Italy, 24 children with inflamed skin were treated with evening primrose oil or olive oil. After only four weeks, the skin of essential fatty acid-treated children significantly improved in comparison with that of olive oil-treated children.
- ✓ Researchers from the Pediatric Clinic, Health Center, Gripen, Karlstad, Sweden, conducted a double-blind, placebo-controlled, parallel group study that included 60 children with inflamed skin. The children completed a 16 week treatment period with either evening primrose oil or placebo capsules. The study observed significant improvements in the health of the children's skin.

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