

Exercise plays

a crucial part in keeping skin healthy



Olay ambassador and Anti-aging expert, Dr Naina Sachdev explains why...

One of the most frequent questions my patients ask me is just how important exercise is to their health and skin care regimen. I always tell them that it is an extremely important part, as important as drinking eight glasses of water per day or eating a diet rich in fruit, vegetables and other anti-oxidants!

And the reason why? Not only does it help keep your body's health balanced from the inside, but it is an excellent way to care for your skin, ensuring it stays healthy and even elastic!

I think it's always important to explain a little bit of the scientific side of things to give patients some background: One of the most important biomarkers of aging is sarcopenia, which is a loss of muscle mass due to age. We lose about approx 180 grams of muscle mass every year past the age of 40. This is one of the main reasons why the skin starts to sag and lose its muscle tone as we get older.

Then, like I tell my patients, combine that with the fact that our hormone levels decline as we age – especially testosterone in both women and men (which is a hormone that helps us

maintain muscle mass) – and it becomes clear that it is yet another reason why skin loses its elasticity, and hence we look old!

Unfortunately it doesn't stop there ladies! The hormonal decline of estrogen and testosterone can additionally increase cortisol levels and disrupt the body's sensitivity to insulin. This causes increased inflammation in the body and can again lead to increased inflammation in the skin. Many skin conditions such as acne rosacea, which is also known as adult acne where blood vessels in the face can enlarge and give the skin a red appearance, start to occur with age.

So this is where exercise can help! Not only does regular exercise give the body a better shape and tone, but it provides many health benefits that allow you to live a longer, more active life. These are just some of the many benefits that I discuss with my patients.

Regular exercise:

- Increases the body's percentage of lean muscle mass and decreases body fat. Since muscle is metabolically more active, the more muscle you have the more calories you will burn even in a resting state
 - Improves insulin sensitivity and avoid the highs and lows of blood sugar problems
 - Lowers cholesterol levels
 - Increases energy and vitality
 - Improves the quality and duration of sleep
 - Reduces stress and tension
 - Elevates mood and increases your mental performance by increasing your brain neurotransmitter levels, especially serotonin – a substance which makes you feel happy and lessens anxiety
 - Reduces pain, as it increases the levels of endorphins in your body
- Regular exercise can also have hugely positive effects on the skin, by:
- Improving skin tone by increasing circulation to the skin

- Detoxifying the skin by increased sweating
 - Decreasing inflammation of the skin by reducing cortisol levels
 - Increasing skin tightness by increasing muscle mass
 - Increasing the skin's immune defence system by reducing oxidative stress on the Langerhans cells (the skin's immune defence system)
 - Increasing collagen production by reducing collagenase activity. Collagenase is an enzyme which breaks down collagen and levels often increase with age
 - Improving skin hydration by stabilizing the skin mantle, which maintains the proper PH of the skin. This hydration can also be supplemented by using a good, anti-aging cream like Olay's Regenerist Microsculpting cream, or Olay's newly reformulated Total Effects range. Some of my patients say they don't want to sweat it out with hours of heavy exercise, but I tell them that exercise needn't be that strenuous. Numerous studies show that non-vigorous exercise such as moderately brisk walking for 30-60 minutes is as good as vigorous running as long as:
 - a- the total number of calories consumed and burned per week is similar
 - b- you get your heart rate to at least 50% of its maximum capacity for the duration of the exercise.
- But, before I end I have just one piece of advice: Remember, the benefits of exercise to your health and your skin last only as long as you make exercise a regular part of your life. Exercise isn't like a diet where you quickly lose those few pounds of weight and then go back to your old habits. Short term exercise is just that: short term. Exercise needs to be a lifelong habit, just as healthy eating needs to be a lifelong habit. Commitment to exercise long term will do wonders for your skin and health, and keep you looking young!

Dr. Naina Sachdev