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Beauty SOS

Quick tips for major beauty issues

As her 30th birthday was getting closer, Farah's nervousness got worse. By the time I saw her at a friend's party, she was silently going through a 'pre-midlife-crisis'.

"I'm doing all I can to maintain my looks, but some things are just getting harder to maintain no matter what I do. I'm so nervous that one day I'll wake up and realise there was more that I could have done. Does food help?" she asked.

"Of course!" I replied. What we eat affects us inside and out. Actually, beauty (or vanity) is usually one of the biggest reasons why people come to see me. A digestive problem, for example, is often brushed off as unimportant until it starts causing skin rashes. Very often, the person's health is judged by the way they look from the outside: skin, hair, nails, etc."

My conversation with Farah, and with many girls like her, is what started Beauty SOS. Read on to find out answers to some of the most common beauty complaints:

Problem: My skin is breaking out in spots.

Solution: Avoid all dairy products and cut down on sugars, now! Dairy products are full of hormones and pro-inflammatory substances. What does that mean? It means spots will increase, and existing spots will get worse. Skin very quickly reacts to shifts in hormones, so avoid putting in more hormones into your system. Dairy products include butter, cheese, milk, cream, yoghurt, and anything else that can be traced back to the cow.

Also, sugar is known to cause 'diabetes of the skin', where the shifts in insulin can cause skin breakouts. If you, like many people, consider chocolates and sweets to be your lifeline, then think again. Excess sugar has a direct effect on skin health and beauty.

Problem: My skin is looking pale.

Solution: More iron. A lot of females of reproductive age are deficient in iron mainly because they have a monthly cycle of blood loss, and also because women don't eat as much red meat (usually for fear of gaining weight). One of the first symptoms of iron-deficiency is pale skin. So eat iron-rich foods such as a good lean steak. Other foods rich in iron are green leaves (the darker the better) such as barbir, jarjir, spinach, parsley, coriander, etc. It is also important to note that there are some things that lower the absorption of iron such as tea and coffee.

Iron supplements should only be taken with the supervision of your health care provider.

Problem: My skin and hair are dry.

Solution: Have more essential fats (good fats), and water. Being low in either of these can result in dry skin. Essential fats are responsible for maintaining moisture in all body

cells, including skin. So eat a handful of raw nuts and seeds every day to get enough of these 'good fats'.

Also, dehydration often reflects in the skin, so drink up. Everybody knows that they should drink more water, but very few of them do anything about it. So what are you going to do? Put a 1.5litre bottle of water on your desk, for example, and make sure you finish it by the end of the day, every day.

Problem: My nails are chipping.

Solution: Think calcium, protein, and stomach acid. Calcium is responsible for the strength of the nails. People often drink milk as a calcium source, but the problem is that milk does not contain magnesium which is needed for calcium absorption. The best thing to do is to have foods that have both calcium and magnesium, such as raw almonds.

Also, protein is what nails are made of, so a diet low in protein will most likely result in weak nails. So add more protein to your meals and snacks, such as chicken, turkey, fish, lean meat, beans, lentils, peas, nuts, and seeds.

Furthermore, weak nails can sometimes be an indication of low acidity in the stomach. Try to start meals with a salad that is dressed with lemon and vinegar to improve acidity levels.

Problem: I am noticing more wrinkles on my face, especially around my eyes.

Solution: Cut down on sugar and increase vitamin C. Nobody likes to hear this, but excess sugar in your diet lower the flexibility of the skin tissue, making it more prone to being wrinkled. So, again, think twice about your indulgence. Consider limiting chocolates and desserts to once or twice a week only.

Vitamin C goes into the making of collagen, which helps keep skin flexible and strong at the same time. The problem is that very few people have enough vitamin C in their diet. Vitamin C is found mainly in fruits and vegetables. Also, sugar competes with vitamin C when inside the body. So, imagine there is only one seat left on the bus and both vitamin C and sugar are at the door. Sugar will always win by taking that seat, kicking vitamin C out. Which means more wrinkles! Smoking also uses up a lot of vitamin C in the body, preventing it from being used for skin cells and collagen. So stock up on fruits, vegetables, and salads, and think hard before you binge on chocolates or smoke a cigarette.

Problem: I have a scar that is taking forever to heal.

Solution: Think zinc. Zinc is an amazing mineral that helps speed up healing, and that includes scars, wounds, or even traces of facial spots. So eat more foods rich in zinc such as raw nuts and seeds (especially pumpkin seeds), as well as seafood (shrimps, etc.). Zinc can also be applied externally to speed up healing (see zinc cream suggestion in the box). When you are severely low in zinc, it shows up as white spots on the nails.

Problem: I have dark circles under my eyes.

Solution: Cut out wheat! Wheat is the grain used to make most breads, pastas, pastries, pizzas, etc. It has become a staple food in modern society and most people are eating too much wheat. Excess wheat in the diet can cause a 'sensitivity' which can result in black

circles around the eyes. Look closely at your diet and try to assess how much wheat you are having on a daily basis. Wheat once or twice a week usually does not cause a problem, but the continuous consumption of this grain can have side-effects, including dark circles under the eyes. Try to substitute wheat with other grains such as rye bread, kamut pasta, brown rice, and others. Dark circles under the eyes may take a bit longer than other symptoms to improve, but should do so with time.

For any beauty concern, I would always recommend a daily multi vitamin / mineral with extra vitamin C.

NATURAL SKIN CREAMS:

- Aloe vera gel – effective for rashes, spots, wrinkles, or burns
- Vitamin E cream – beneficial as a moisturiser; also for stretch marks or scars
- Zinc cream (such as Sudocrem or Zincast) – helps with healing rashes, scars, or spots

Alia Almoayed is a Nutritional Therapist running a busy nutrition consultancy in Bahrain, offering nutrition advice to the whole Middle East community. She writes health articles for various publications, holds lectures and seminars on health and nutrition, runs a weekly live radio health programme, and heads a number of weight loss projects. Alia is the author of *I Want Healthy Kids*, a book on how to raise healthy kids, and *The Dream Body Eating Plan*, a weight loss guide; she is also co-author of *101 Ways To Improve Your Health*. For more information, to book appointments, to get regular email health tips, or to request Alia's special FREE Report entitled: *5 Secrets Your Doctor Won't Tell You About Your Health*, visit www.AliaAlmoayed.com.