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Why Your Skin Needs More Fat From Vitamin F

The ABC's of skin care don't end at E
By Heather Cichwoski | March 4, 2019



When it comes to buzzy beauty ingredients (hello, CBD oil and snow algae), Vitamin C and Vitamin E get a lot of attention. But how well do you really know your skin care vitamins? Vitamin B helps with skin cell turnover, C is for brightening, E is for nourishing...but is vitamin F even a thing? Yep, it sure is.

What Is Vitamin F?

Dr. Anna Guanche, board-certified dermatologist and celebrity beauty expert, says that an easy way to remember vitamin F is to think "F" for fat. That's because vitamin F (or linoleic acid as you might know it) is a collection of unsaturated fats, like omega-3, omega-6 and omega-9, says Christopher Caires, PhD for Perricone MD. Vitamin F is found in essential oils like chia, rosehip and argan.



Why Skin Needs Vitamin F

Essential fatty acids are the building blocks of cell membranes, which keep skin (as well bones and hormones) functioning. In the case of skin, linoleic acid is a building block for ceramides, the wax-type oils in sebum that are one of skin's main moisturizing elements, Guanche says. What's interesting is that linoleic acid cannot be made by the body and must be ingested for the process to occur.

Ingesting Vitamin F

Experts say vitamin F can be ingested or applied topically. Noshing on more foods rich in good fats, like avocado or salmon, will keep skin smooth and supple. Eating good fats is something Guanche recommends for her patients with drier skin or eczema.

Topical Vitamin F

All skin types can benefit from a topical application of vitamin F. "Who doesn't want to boast that their stratum corneum (the protective outer layer of skin) is the strongest in the land?" asks celebrity makeup artist Natalia López de Quintana. "That's what increasing both your intake and topical use of vitamin F does."

According to Guanche, those with normal to dry skin types benefit when linoleic acids are applied topically. Caires adds that vitamin F is very good for aging skin because it's critical for supporting the protective moisture barrier, which breaks down as we get older and lose vitamin F, resulting in lines and wrinkles.



Choosing Vitamin F Products



Vitamin F can be found in almost every product type, including serums, moisturizers and even sheet masks. Guanche says fatty acids are best delivered topically through oil-based or fat-based (lipophilic) products rather than water-based ones. Like tricky vitamin C, vitamin F must be stable and remain active in its container for the best results. Products also need to penetrate skin as opposed to just sitting on top of it.

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