By: Dr. Alyssa Musgrove

Taking good care of your skin is crucial if you want it to remain healthy and youthful. When looking for ways to help reduce the signs of aging, you do not necessarily need to invest in expensive creams or lengthy procedures. There are many simple, inexpensive steps you can take to help your skin age gracefully. Here are four anti-aging habits you can begin today to ensure your skin stays looking its very best.

1. **Drink more water, rehydrate your skin**

Dehydration can affect your skin just as much as your body. You may have noticed your skin starts getting blotchy, your acne worsens and your skin becomes looser and thinner on days when you do not have a lot of water. Many people are chronically dehydrated, not realizing these types of physical effects are simply because they are not getting enough water on a daily basis.

The amount of water you need each day to stay properly hydrated is somewhat subjective, since it depends on lifestyle factors. If you are in the sun a lot and sweating, or you participate in heavy fitness, you should be drinking more water in order to make up for the loss of hydration. You may also need more water if your diet consists of a lot of sodium, salt, caffeine or alcohol. While the rule of thumb is 64 ounces a day, your body might need a little more. A good indication you are well hydrated is looking at the color of your urine. It should be clear, or almost clear, when you are drinking enough water.

If drinking a lot of water is a struggle for you, try reducing your consumption of other beverages, like soda and juice, and reach for water instead. You can also try flavoring your water by adding the juice of fresh lemons or limes, or adding sliced cucumbers or berries. Choose a water bottle you enjoy using, keep water in your car and at home, and track how much you are drinking to hold yourself accountable.

1. **Get your vitamins from food sources**

Vitamins and minerals are also essential to maintaining a youthful appearance and reducing signs of aging. But instead of just taking supplements, you should first try to get important nutrients through whole, fresh food sources. Just by switching to a healthy diet of fruits, veggies, nuts and seeds, you will be well on your way to getting all of the important vitamins. Wild-caught fish provides anti-inflammatory omega-3 fats that slow down the aging process. Teas like green tea, white tea, oolong tea, and rooibos tea contain antioxidants that protect your cells from free radical damage and aging.

1. **Wear sunscreen every day**

No matter your age, skin type, color of your skin, or current signs of aging, you need to protect your skin with sunscreen. You should wear sunscreen every day, applying it at least 10-15 minutes before heading outside. To make this habit easier, there are many moisturizers on the market that have sun block in them already, allowing you to both hydrate your skin and protect it at the same time. Keep your sunscreen in the bathroom so it becomes an automatic part of your morning routine.

**4. Take good care of your skin**

Wash your face twice a day with warm water, exfoliate once a week to remove dead skin, and avoid makeup with additives or harsh chemicals. Talk to your dermatologist about which products to use or any skin conditions you may have. Dermatologists can often recommend products to help treat a variety of skin conditions, while also providing anti-aging benefits at the same time.

Essential oils like frankincense, lavender, myrrh and sandalwood can provide additional anti-aging benefits. Frankincense oil has been known to protect skin cells, improve skin tone, reduce the appearance of wrinkles, scars and sunspots. Lavender oil brings rapid healing to dry skin, minor cuts, scrapes and burns. Be sure to mix your essential oils with an unscented carrier oil (coconut oil, jojoba oil, or pomegranate seed oil) and test a small area of your skin first to test for possible allergic reactions.

By taking the time to develop a few simple daily habits now, you can help protect your skin from premature aging and keep it looking healthy for years to come.

*Pathways to Healing specializes in holistic chiropractic care.  Dr. Alyssa Musgrove draws on a variety of techniques, including chiropractic, kinesiology, nutrition, food allergy testing and lifestyle counseling to assist clients in achieving optimal health and wellness in one setting. Pathways to Healing is located at 1022 Founders Row, Lake Oconee Village, Greensboro.  The office can be reached at*[*706-454-2040*](tel:706-454-2040)*.*