

## 8 Little-Known Benefits of Vitamin C for Your Skin, Hair and Health

BY LINDSAY TIGAR · APRIL 3, 2017



You wake up to the sound of your alarm reminding you that another day has reared its head, and unfortunately, yours is all foggy. Your nose is stuffed, you feel a fever coming on and nothing can motivate you to get out of bed—not even your favorite barista at the neighborhood coffee shop. You’re getting sick and your first thought (thanks to the nagging of your loving mother) is to load up on vitamin C to kick those germs to the curb, ASAP!

Along with improving and strengthening your immune system, vitamin C possesses some impressive benefits for many of the skin conditions you might be struggling with. “Vitamin C, also known as ascorbic acid, is a water-soluble vitamin

that is an antioxidant that helps form and maintain connective tissue. An antioxidant helps capture free radical damage caused by oxidative stress or sun damage to the skin. It is also essential for collagen production,” says Dermatologist Purvisha Patel MD.

So how exactly can this essential ingredient found in many skin care and hair care products help you? We chatted with some dermatologists to give you the lowdown.



## 1. Fading Dark Spots

Depending on the condition of your skin, how much time you spend in the sun and your ethnic background, you might have more dark spots than some of your peers. Though this is normal and part of the aging process, vitamin C can help to reverse the appearance of dark spots. “Vitamin C seems to prevent the formation of brown spots by protecting your skin from damage and scavenging free radicals,” Dermatologist [Dr. Thomas P. Sterry, MD](#), says. “While it won’t take the place of a sunscreen (and you should be wearing one every day) it does seem to be helpful.”



## 2. Improving the Appearance of Dark Circles

If you’re like 90 percent of the population, you probably don’t ever get enough sleep. The good news: most eye creams can help, and that’s because one key component in those under-eye creams is vitamin C. “Tyrosine in the skin is converted into melanin, which is the pigment that darkens skin by way of an enzyme called tyrosinase. Vitamin C inhibits that enzyme so less melanin is made so the skin gets lighter. This is why topical vitamin C improves dark circles and dark spots,” [Debra Jaliman](#), assistant professor of dermatology at Ichan School of Medicine at Mount Sinai says.



### 3. Smoothing Out Dry Skin

Winter or not, you might find yourself struggling with dry skin patches or perpetually thirsty cells. No matter how much lotion or moisturizer you lather on, you still feel flaky, itchy or struggle with redness. That's because you're not focusing on a star ingredient that could make a difference. According to New York City-based dermatologist, [Gary Goldenberg](#). "Vitamin C may be an important part of a moisturizer or serum, since it helps cells mature and differentiate normally," he explains.



### 4. Thwarting Loss of Collagen

While Botox and fillers are an extreme way to treat skin that loses its elasticity over time, another way to approach your routine is to consider the nutrients that naturally help your skin stay young. "Vitamin C is essential to the development of new collagen in your skin. Therefore, without it, the skin will get thinner and less supple with age. In order to keep it available at all stages of collagen formation, it should be used topically as well as taken orally," Sterry says.



### 5. Fighting Free Radicals and Sun Damage

Though basking in the sunlight feels great in the moment, anytime you expose your skin to dangerous rays, you put yourself at risk for damage. In addition to wearing sunscreen, no matter how cloudy or bright it is, you should also use vitamin C. "When skin cells are damaged by oxidative stress and the sun, free radicals are released into the skin and blood vessels surrounding the area. These charged molecules damage the surrounding tissue and increase collagen breakdown," Patel shares, "Ascorbic acid [vitamin C] helps capture free radicals and stops oxidative stress break down."



## 6. Repairing Hair Damage

You might not realize it, but our hair is impacted by our environment almost as much as our skin is. Because the effects don't instantly show up in a noticeable way, we forget about protecting it in a more deliberate way. "Our hair is damaged by UV and pollution, as well as many other things we do to it, and vitamin C can help repair some of this damage the same way it helps skin repair," Goldenberg explains.



## 7. Preventing Gum and Bone Disease

That glass of OJ (or packet of Emergen-C) that you take at the first sign of sickness might help give your immune system a boost, but Dr. Sterry claims that it can also do more than just keep you from encountering coughing fits. He explains, "Vitamin C helps to prevent gum disease and probably helps to keep bones healthy in a roundabout way through its assistance with collagen formation." That being said, Sterry also advises not to overdo it, since an overdose of vitamin C does not have any additional benefits than the recommended daily capsule.



## 8. Fighting Fatigue

In addition to all of the incredible benefits mentioned above, another perk of vitamin C is what it does for your mind and your overall mood. As noted by Dr. Goldenberg, "Being nutritionally balanced (that includes getting enough vitamin C) has been shown to improve overall cellular function and general health. This can lead to better quality of life in general. Several studies have also suggested that vitamin C improves mood but the mechanics of this is still unknown."