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**PREVENTION** by Trish Clasen Marsanico

## 13 Biotin-Rich Foods Derms Say You Should Eat for Healthier Skin



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Biotin is all over the place, from supplements to shampoos. But while biotin supports skin, nail, and hair health, the science to back biotin supplements is still evolving.

Biotin, also known as vitamin B7, is an essential vitamin that helps convert food into energy. While you can get it in supplement form,

experts say the most efficient way to fill up on the micronutrient is to eat biotin-rich foods.

Biotin is most famous for its proposed hair and nail perks, but that's just the tip of the iceberg. Biotin also has jobs related to metabolism and liver health, says [Mona Gohara](#), M.D., an associate clinical professor of dermatology at Yale School of Medicine. And it plays "a crucial role in the regeneration of new skin cells," explains [Laura Iu](#), R.D.N., owner of Laura Iu Nutrition, a private practice in New York City. "When it comes to issues like wounds, cuts, rashes, dryness or skin inflammation, biotin is essential for promoting and managing healthy skin." So it's important that you get enough.

Meet the Experts: [Mona Gohara, M.D.](#), is an associate clinical professor of dermatology at Yale School of Medicine; [Laura Iu, R.D.N.](#), is owner of Laura Iu Nutrition, a private practice in New York City; [Gary Goldenberg, M.D.](#), is assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital.

But eating healthy overall is crucial for hair, skin, and nail health, too. "A balanced diet full of whole foods is important in general, and this applies to patients with hair loss as well," says [Gary Goldenberg, M.D.](#), an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital. Eating balanced meals that include biotin-rich foods can support your overall health, raising the odds you'll have healthier skin, hair, and nails, he says. (Dr. Goldenberg just cautions that this isn't always enough for people with hair loss.)

With that in mind, these are the foods that are richest in biotin. Add them to your cart to get enough biotin in your diet going forward.



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## Egg Yolks

While eggs are a nutritional powerhouse as a whole, the yolks in particular are the real stars—especially when it comes to biotin, says Iu. The yellow center of a large egg contains 7.8 micrograms (mcg) of biotin (26% of your DV), according to the [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#). When you eat your eggs, you want to make sure they're fully cooked to get their full dose of biotin—that's because egg whites [contain avidin, a protein that binds to biotin](#) and can prevent its

absorption. Cooking denatures the avidin and gives biotin center stage to do its thing.

There are plenty of [healthy ways to eat eggs](#), from hard-boiled to baked in a quiche.



Dorling Kindersley: William Reavell//Getty Images

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## Spinach

There are tons of health benefits to eating spinach (hello, [iron!](#)), but a big pile of greens offers up a good helping of biotin, too. 100 grams of [mature spinach](#) has 4.25 mcg biotin, while the same amount of [baby spinach](#)

contains 1.66, according to the USDA. Spinach is also [high in fiber](#) for gut health and [folate](#) for cell regrowth and development (which is especially crucial during pregnancy).

Get your fix by whipping up a quick, healthy [spinach and yogurt dip](#).



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## Almonds

Another food recommended for someone who is trying to get more biotin into their diet? “Nuts, such as almonds,” says Gohara. According to the [USDA](#), 100 grams of whole, raw almonds clocks in at about 57

micrograms of biotin (100 grams is equal to about 3/4 cup almonds, by the way). Pecans, walnuts, and pine nuts also rank high on the list.

And while you're getting your biotin fix with a handful of mixed [nuts](#), you'll be reaping other benefits too—like their boost of protein and healthy fats. Almonds specifically are rich in calcium, magnesium, and vitamin E.



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## Salmon

[Salmon](#) is a key part of a heart-healthy diet because it contains omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, as well as iron, choline, vitamin B12, and selenium. When cooked, the filets *also* consist of about 5 micrograms of biotin per 3 ounces, per the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Feature it for dinner with this [Nori-and-Sesame Wrapped Salmon](#) recipe from the *Prevention* Test Kitchen.



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**Sweet Potatoes**

In 1/2 cup of cooked [sweet potatoes](#), you will find about 2.4 micrograms of biotin (read: 8% daily recommended value), according to the NIH. Sweet potatoes are also high vitamin A and fiber and make a good replacement for lesser nutritious starches like bread and white potatoes.

It also helps that the spuds taste great roasted, baked, air-fried and [mashed](#).



Victoria Pearson//Getty Images

“Soy products which are commonly found in East Asian cuisines, like edamame and tofu, also contain biotin,” says Iu. In addition to its biotin content, tofu specifically [may support gut health](#) by providing it with good bacteria to diversify your gut microbiome. It’s also low in saturated fat which makes it a [heart-healthy food](#).

Throw the plant-based protein onto a sheet tray with baby bok choy, sugar snap peas, and a few other ingredients for a fast, one-pan (vegan!) dinner.



Westend61//Getty Images

## Legumes

Biotin is in legumes including peanuts, peas, beans, and lentils. One ounce of roasted, salted peanuts provides nearly 5 mcg of biotin, which serves up a whopping 17% of the daily recommended amount.

And legumes are more versatile and easy to incorporate into meals than you think. “Dishes like dal, a lentil curry, are a great plant-based source of biotin,” says Iu. Most legumes pack a good plant-based source of protein, too.



Brian Hagiwara//Getty Images

## Tuna

This [high-protein food](#) doubles as a biotin-rich food. One 3-ounce serving of canned tuna (in water) offers 2% the daily recommended biotin, according to the NIH. It's an ideal option to stash in the pantry and quickly add to salads, pastas, sandwiches, and rice whenever you want.

Tuna is also a viable source of vitamin D, omega-3s, and magnesium, per the [USDA](#).



Anna Blazhuk//Getty Images

## Bananas

Which fruits contain biotin? Bananas are a safe bet, clocking in at about 0.2 micrograms per 1/2 cup. That doesn't sound like a lot, but it's 1% of the daily recommended value. More famously, bananas are also an excellent way to get your potassium and magnesium for heart health. And they are a [prebiotic food](#) containing about 3 grams of fiber which may stimulate the growth of good bacteria in your gut.

Blend some into a [smoothie](#) for breakfast or slice and place them over oatmeal.



## Broccoli

Broccoli is known for its health benefits—the florets are packed with vitamins C, K and A. Plus, 1/2 cup of the green cruciferous veg has 1% of the daily recommended biotin, according to the NIH. Best of all, you can enjoy it raw (dipped in hummus) or cooked (steamed, roasted, sautéed) so you never get bored.



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## Chicken Liver

“Some of the richest sources of biotin come from meats like chicken, beef, and liver,” says Iu. While 3 ounces of cooked beef liver provides over 100% of your daily recommended value of biotin, per the NIH, chicken is also an asset and may be easier to incorporate into meals.

It may seem intimidating, but the organ can be treated similarly to other forms of protein: fried with vegetables, topped on pastas, and imbued into sauces to richen their flavor.



veselinaalexandrova//Getty Images

## Pork Chop

The other white meat offers up plenty of biotin, too. Three ounces of a cooked pork chop provides 3.8 micrograms of biotin, or 13% of your daily value.

Pair it with other biotin-rich foods, like spinach, broccoli, and sweet potatoes, for a complete meal that just happens to be good for your hair and nail health.



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## Sunflower seeds

Sunflower seeds are another solid source of biotin. One serving—or a 1/4 cup of seeds—delivers 2.6 micrograms of biotin. (That's 9% of your daily value.)

You can nosh on these as-is or use them to add crunch to dishes by sprinkling them over things like roasted vegetables or soups.

## What is biotin?

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Biotin is a water-soluble B vitamin that's naturally present in some foods and available as a dietary supplement, according to the [NIH](#). Most biotins in foods are bound to protein, which is why you'll often find it in meats, eggs, and other protein-rich sources.

Because it's water-soluble, your body doesn't store biotin in the same way it does fat-soluble vitamins. As a result, you need to consume it regularly to maintain adequate levels (in addition to using biotin-containing [supplements](#) and [shampoos](#), if that's your thing).

## How much of an impact does biotin have on hair health?

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There are a lot of elements that go into the overall health of your hair, but biotin plays a role. "Biotin is very important for hair health," Dr. Goldenberg says. He points out that it's "essential" for the growth and strength of hair, since biotin is important for protein synthesis and metabolism. (And hair is made out of a protein called keratin.)

"While true biotin deficiency is rare in the U.S., patients with low or insufficient levels can suffer from hair breakage and damage," Dr.

Goldenberg says. While [research](#) shows mixed results for biotin supplements in patients with hair loss, “it is my experience that biotin is a helpful tool in the tool belt of treatments of hair loss,” Dr. Goldenberg says.

## Can you have too much biotin?

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It’s not easy to overload on biotin-rich foods. Because this vitamin is water-soluble, you’ll simply pee out any extra levels your body doesn’t need, Iu says.

That doesn’t mean you should go overboard, though. Again, the [recommended daily value](#) of biotin is 30 micrograms, and it’s best to stay around that.

There are potential interactions with prescription medications or you can overdo it with a supplement, Iu cautions. Dr. Gohara adds that while biotin “doesn’t alter thyroid function, it can make thyroid laboratory testing inaccurate.”

## Signs of being biotin deficient

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[Biotinidase deficiency](#) is a rare genetic condition in which the body is unable to recycle biotin for use. It can cause seizures, weak muscle tone, breathing problems, hearing and vision loss, problems with movement and balance, skin rashes, hair loss, and fungal infection. Treatment is supplemental biotin beginning at birth, which is why most newborns are screened for the condition, per the NIH.

Signs of less significant, partial biotin deficiency include skin rashes, hair loss, and weak muscle tone.

Other populations prone to biotin deficiency are pregnant people and people who drink alcohol heavily, because alcohol inhibits the absorption of biotin, the NIH says.

## What to do if you're concerned about your biotin levels

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Most people start to think about biotin levels if they're dealing with hair loss or skin or nail issues.

“If you are losing your hair, see your dermatologist ASAP,” Dr. Goldenberg says. “Early intervention usually leads to best results.”

During the exam, your dermatologist may recommend having blood testing done. “I often check patients’ nutrient levels to ensure there is no deficiency,” Dr. Goldenberg says. After the exam, your dermatologist may choose to recommend a dietary change or supplements, depending on what they think is behind your symptoms.

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