

Scientists Find Surprising Food Slows Skin Aging

4 min read



- Scientists say black ginseng extract slows down skin aging.
- Existing research backs this up, but there's more to it.
- Here, dermatologists explain the findings.

You have your choice of products to support aging skin (from the [best eye creams](#) to the [best retinol serums](#)), but research is always exploring new options. Now, scientists say they've found a food that slows down the visible signs of aging—but is it legit?

The food in question is black ginseng extract. This natural product is created from fresh ginseng roots that have been steamed, dried, and concentrated. While it's technically not a new ingredient, the buzz around black ginseng extract as a topical solution to the visible signs of aging has been growing.

Meet the experts: [Ife J. Rodney, M.D.](#), founding director of Eternal Dermatology + Aesthetics; [Gary Goldenberg, M.D.](#), founder of Goldenberg Dermatology; [Joshua Zeichner, M.D.](#), director of cosmetic and clinical research at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City.

Ginseng has been used in traditional Chinese medicine for centuries, but there is more recent research to support the use of black ginseng extract for aging skin. While the data around this as an anti-aging tool is promising, dermatologists are still a little wary. Here's why.

What is black ginseng extract?

Ginseng, or *Panax ginseng*, is an herb with slow-growing roots that's often used in herbal medicine, per the [National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health](#) (NCCIH). Specifically, it's been used as a calming agent in traditional Chinese medicine and as an adaptogen—meaning, it helps the body manage and recover from stress.

“Black ginseng is an extract from traditional ginseng,” explains [Joshua Zeichner, M.D.](#), director of cosmetic and clinical research at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. “The processing of the extract turns the compound black, as the active ingredients become enhanced.”

Black ginseng is rich in antioxidant compounds called ginsenosides, which have known anti-inflammatory effects, Dr. Zeichner says.

What does the research say about using black ginseng extract for anti-aging?

The data we found to support the use of black ginseng extract for aging skin appears to be conducted by researchers with ties to companies that are creating or already making products with the extract. While this isn't unusual in skincare research, it's just something to keep in mind. Still, dermatologists say there seems to be something here.

The latest study on black ginseng extract's impact on skin was published in the [Journal of Dermatologic Science and Cosmetic Technology](#). For the study, researchers created models of inflammatory aging on human foreskin fibroblast cells. ([Fibroblast cells](#) contribute to connective tissue and skin elasticity.) The researchers used those cells to construct a 3D skin model.

From there, the researchers tested black ginseng extract on the cells. They discovered that black ginseng extract tamped down on the activity of matrix metalloproteinase-1 (MMP-1), an enzyme that breaks down collagen, the protein that helps keep skin firm. Collagen naturally degrades with time, causing skin to become less elastic and allowing wrinkles to form. This suggests that black ginseng extract may help to preserve collagen.

The team also tested the black ginseng extract on the 3D skin model and found that the extract helped to rebalance processes in the skin that control tissue breakdown and repair. As a result, the black ginseng extract was helpful in maintaining the skin's structure.

The researchers also took a closer look at the ginsenosides in black ginseng extract and discovered that they can target and bind with proteins that are linked with inflammation and aging in the skin. "Black ginseng extract has potential application value in alleviating skin inflammatory aging," the researchers wrote in the conclusion.

This isn't the only research to support black ginseng extract's anti-aging powers. A 2022 study published in the journal [Applied Sciences](#) found that fermented black ginseng "stimulated anti-wrinkle effects" in fibroblast cells.

A mouse study published in the [Journal of Ginseng Research](#) in 2026 found that black ginseng may help to tamp down on oxidative stress and inflammation in the skin, both of which are tied to the formation of wrinkles.

Why might black ginseng extract help with aging skin?

Black ginseng extract seems to target inflammatory markers in the skin. The latest study found that black ginseng extract counteracted a compound that's known to break down skin tissue while reducing an inflammatory signal called PGE2, and encouraging the production of a collagen-protecting compound called TIMP1. "Taken together, black ginseng shows promise as a treatment to reduce inflammatory skin aging, which is also referred to as 'inflammaging,'" Dr. Zeichner says.

Black ginseng also seems to bind to inflammatory proteins, slowing down the process of skin aging, points out [Gary Goldenberg, M.D.](#), founder of Goldenberg Dermatology.

This isn't a slam dunk for black ginseng extract, though. "We need more data to evaluate the real-world effectiveness of black ginseng compared

to traditionally used antioxidants like vitamin C,” Dr. Zeichner says.

The bottom line

Dermatologists say it’s not quite time to add black ginseng to your routine. “It appears to be safe, and there have not been any safety signals for *topical* use,” Dr. Goldenberg says. “However, more research is needed to definitively confirm the safety and efficacy of this ingredient, especially long-term and in a variety of patient populations.”

[Ife J. Rodney, M.D.](#), founding director of Eternal Dermatology + Aesthetics, agrees. “It’s not something I recommend right now,” she says. “While the research seems promising, a whole lot more has to be done before everyone should start using this.”

Still, Dr. Zeichner says there’s likely no harm in using products that contain black ginseng extract on your skin to see if you get better results compared to what you’re already using—it’s just not clear that it will actually work.
