

HEALTH SHARE ↗

THIS IS YOUR SKIN ON VITAMINS

Comparing ingestible and topical vitamins and their effects on your skin.

By: Isabella Sarlija

Since the global pandemic is still affecting the lives of people around the world, many of us are using this opportunity to take better care of ourselves. Whether that's through healthy home-cooked meals, or daily meditations to ease some of that lingering anxiety, we're learning what practices and products help us feel our best.

With that in mind, we believe that the majority of us have delved into the world of vitamins to support our immune systems. Although it was not our initial motive, the benefits

MOST TALKED ABOUT



A Beauty Editor's
Guide to Practicing
Self-Care

we've experienced are wide-ranging: less brain fog, more productivity, and yes, general improvement in our hair, skin, and nails. But what exactly happens to our skin when we take vitamins? And how do those benefits compare to when we use a topical vitamin C or retinoid? We asked two experts to find out more: [Dr. Nigma Talib](#), a naturopathic doctor based in Los Angeles who has been studying naturopathic healing for the past 20 years, and [Dr. Loretta Ciraldo](#), MD, FAAD, a Miami-based board-certified dermatologist with over 40 years' experience and founder of Dr. Loretta Skincare. Here's what they have to say.

REMEMBER TO TAKE YOUR VITAMINS

You know that saying, *you are what you eat*? Vitamins are crucial for maintaining health and restoring wellness throughout the body. So does that mean you can take a multivitamin while simultaneously eating copious takeout and still be healthy? Not exactly. As Dr. Talib explains, "Vitamins and minerals are able to be [had] from your diet and your food. In order to absorb vitamins and minerals, the important thing is to start with having a healthy diet, absorbing the nutrients from the diet, and then [seeing] if it is there enough of that nutrient in the body to sustain the daily stressors that we're exposed to every day." That's when vitamin supplements come into play. Supplements are not meant to be a replacement of the vitamins and minerals that you get through your diet, but rather an addition to achieve maximum benefits of said vitamin. If you're not eating a healthy diet to begin with, you won't see much of a benefit from popping the occasional vitamin.

You also need to be mindful when shopping for a new vitamin or supplement, since there is little in the way of regulation. Says Dr. Talib, "Not all vitamins and minerals are created [equal]. For example, when you are prescribed an antibiotic, like tetracycline, you can be sure you are getting tetracycline when you go to the pharmacy—it's the same compound given everywhere. With vitamins, that's not the case. They're not made [equal]. Manufacturers vary in terms of strength, [and] quality control [can be] an issue." She explains that some companies can manufacture inexpensive forms of various vitamins that may not even be absorbable or of a comparable quality to its competitor.



How One Writer Structures Her Day & Feels Her Best Doing It



5 Ways to Get an Instagrammable Sneaker Closet



RITUAL	PURE SYNERGY	LOVE WELLNESS
Multivitamin for Women 18+	MultiVitaMin	Perfect Condition Vitamin
\$30	\$28	\$25

WHICH VITAMIN DOES WHAT?

So vitamins are crucial for our overall health, but what exactly do they do for the skin? Here is a breakdown of some of the best vitamins to incorporate into your skin-care routine.

Vitamin A: Topical vitamin A is also known as a topical retinoid. According to Dr. Ciraldo, “[Vitamin A] strengthens collagen, helps breakouts, brightens skin, and evens skin tone.” By accelerating cell turnover, vitamin A helps reveal firmer, brighter skin. And since retinoids can increase your skin’s sensitivity to the sun, they should be applied at night, and you must be diligent with your sunscreen application during the day.

Vitamin B5: Also known as pantothenic acid, this helps to smooth congested skin with its anti-inflammatory properties. Vitamin B5 should be applied at night.

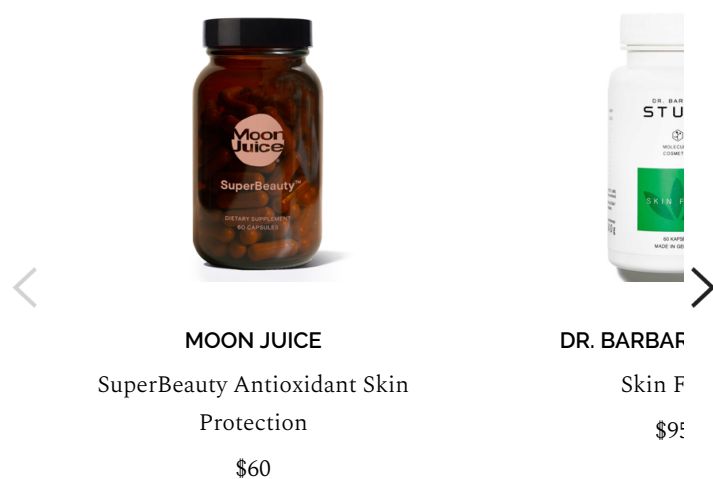
Vitamin C: Vitamin C serums have slowly crept their way into virtually everybody's skin-care regimens, and for good reason. “Vitamin C is going to affect pigmentation,” explains Dr. Talib. It helps to brighten the complexion and diminish dark spots. Although it can be applied both morning and night, you should apply vitamin C in the morning to provide extra protection from pollution throughout the day.

Vitamin D: Our skin always looks a bit healthier when we safely take in a bit of sun, right? Now, this does not necessarily mean that we should be applying vitamin D to our skin. Dr. Ciraldo states, “There is little data on how vitamin D applied topically will help the skin, but one blood-level study showed

that it may help vitamin D-deficient people.” Essentially, it does not do much for the skin, but can be absorbed into the blood for a more systemic effect.

Vitamin E: In one episode of *The Sopranos*, Carmela punctures a vitamin E capsule and rubs its contents onto one of Tony’s scars to help it fade quicker. Turns out, there is very little evidence that vitamin E actually does anything to help with pigmentation. Although, do not sleep on this supplement. Says Dr. Circaldo, “[Vitamin E] is a very hydrating ingredient when used topically.” Vitamin E can be applied on its own, but is most efficient when used in conjunction with vitamin C and Ferulic acid.

Vitamin K1: If you are one of the *many* individuals experiencing redness in the skin or dark circles, vitamin K1 can be the remedy for your issues. Dr. Circaldo explains, “[Vitamin K1] may help with broken-vessel appearance, pre- and post-procedures that cause bruising, and lessening [the] appearance of under-eye circles or red skin.”



PROBIOTICS IN SKIN CARE

We all understand that probiotics are good for us, correct? They help to maintain a healthy gut flora by reducing inflammation, which results in a significant reduction in inflammation throughout the body. With probiotics now entering the skin-care scene in the form of serums and night creams, we want to know if they can have a similar beneficial effect. Dr. Talib explains, “There are two different kinds: prebiotics and probiotics. [Probiotics] orally help the microbiome [in the gut.]”

You would not put the same probiotic necessarily on your face that you would ingest. Prebiotics, from fermented mangosteen, for example, is super good for the skin microbiome. Things like kombucha and fermented [foods] are more prebiotic, which is what you apply to the face. There are a lot of people walking around with small-intestinal bacteria overload, so these fermented foods can make you feel a bit more sick and bloated. But if you eat them as a part of a healthy diet, they can be quite safe and effective. But you can become a bit gassy from them. Now, applying them topically? *Amazing results.*” As Dr. Talib explains, prebiotics support the microbiome of the skin when applied topically, whereas probiotics support the microbiome of the gut.



TO APPLY, OR TO INGEST?

Vitamins and nutrients from our diets eventually enter our bloodstream, which flows to the blood vessels that feed our skin. So if that's the case, is it even necessary to apply vitamins topically if we are ingesting them through healthy diets and supplements? Dr. Ciraldo says, "To achieve the best [vitamin] levels [in the skin], it is most advisable to apply beneficial vitamins to the surface of the skin. The one exception is in cases of severe acne; there is [an ingestible] form of vitamin A called Accutane that is more effective than its topical counterpart, Tretinoin." Topical vitamins target a particular skin issue and are limited to the specific application area. When ingested, their potency decreases, which is why Dr. Talib believes that it is good to both ingest and apply vitamins to the skin to achieve the optimal benefits.

However, there is such a thing as too much with vitamins. Dr. Ciraldo explains, “Ingesting high doses of certain vitamins will cause toxicity. These are the vitamins and minerals [that] can be stored in our liver and damage [our] organs. These include vitamin C and zinc, which can cause nausea, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. Too much selenium could lead to hair loss, gastrointestinal upset, fatigue, and mild nerve damage. Vitamin A toxicity can damage our eyes, and too much vitamin D can cause kidney stones, calcium buildup, and bone pain.” Similarly, applying too much of a vitamin to the skin can cause intense irritation and damage. For both ingesting vitamins and applying them topically, it is best to stick to the recommended daily dose, and consult with your doctor if you have any questions.

Want more stories like this?

[The Real Difference Between Vitamins and Supplements](#)
[5 New Vitamin C Serums That Banish Dark Spots in No Time](#)
[The Best At-Home Hair Removal Products, According to the Pros](#)

Part of the series:

WWW.RN

VIEW THE SERIES ►

Tags: Self-Care
