

# More than skin deep

**A look at vitamins' effect on hair, skin, nails**

By Sarah Newkirk

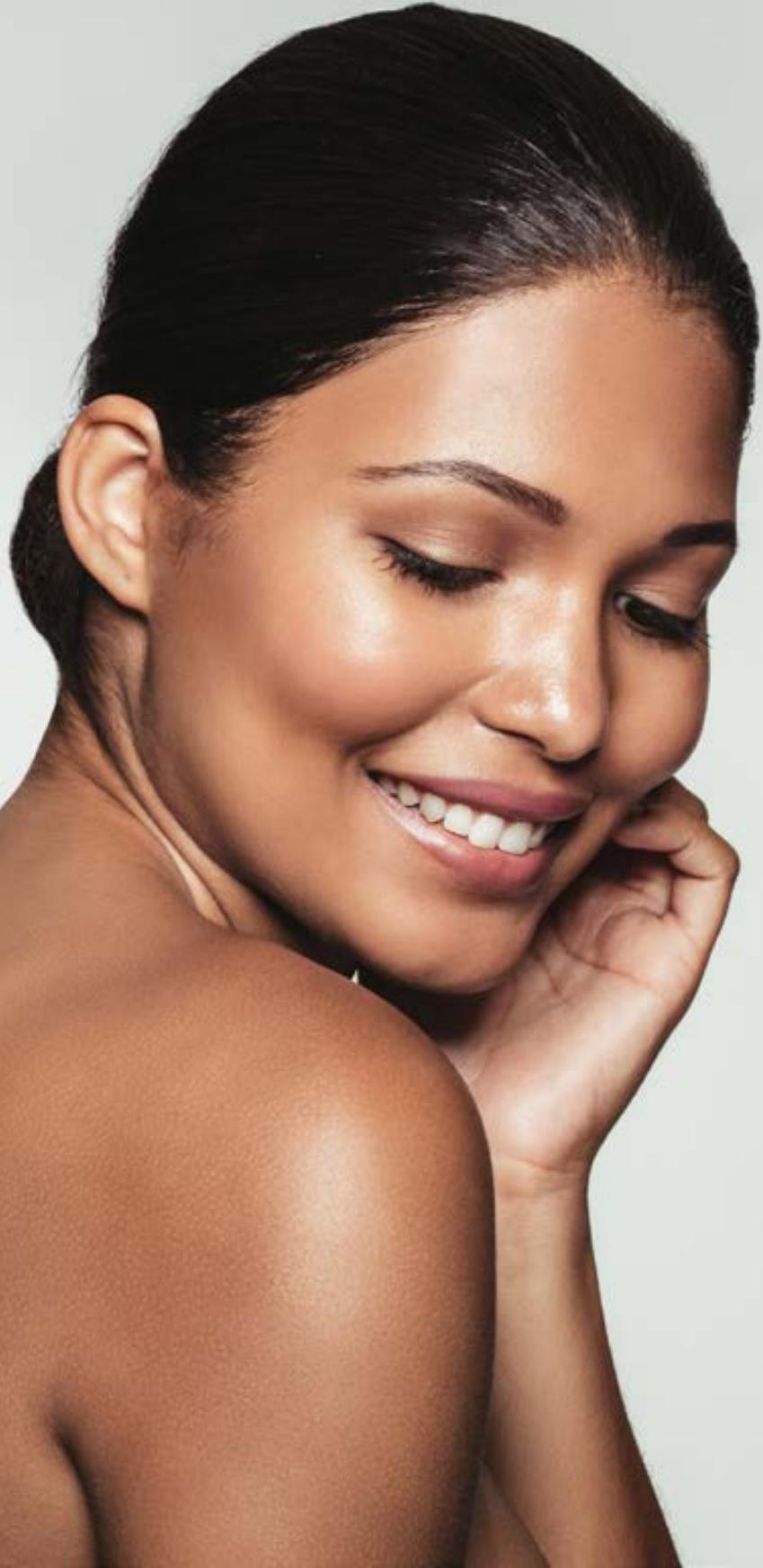
**E**xperts have often differed on the effectiveness of vitamins and supplements, with some insisting they're a huge waste of money.

Numerous products promise to be an elixir for problematic areas such as brittle nails, sagging skin and lifeless hair. The latest trend is a skincare routine without creams, cleansers or moisturizers — swallow a pill or sprinkle some powder in your matcha tea or on your Greek yogurt and you are good to go. Global sales of what's known as ingestible beauty are expected to reach \$7.9 billion by 2025, according to a Transparency Market Research report.

Ingredients often include green tea, resveratrol, maritime pine bark extract, grapeseed extract, milk thistle, fern extract, alpha lipoic acid, probiotics, omega 3 essential fatty acids, lycopene, and vitamins C and E.

But are these nutricosmetics and expensive supplements the fountain of youth?

Vitamins and supplements are not regulated in the way that drugs are, so manufacturers do not have to prove their safety or effec-



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tiveness to the FDA before they start hawking their products.

But while experts agree that a healthy lifestyle marked by good nutrition, exercise and quality sleep is the biggest boost to skin, it's possible that some vitamins can help address beauty issues as well.

Many experts agree that some vitamins do have an impact on healthier skin, including vitamins A, C, D and E, magnesium, omega 3 and biotin, also known as B7.

"I believe that water is the number-one supplement for beauty and great skin, but I also discovered that great supplements like vitamin C, vitamin D, magnesium, quercetin, vitamin E and selenium work as helpers to strengthen collagen production, lower inflammation, reduce acne flare-ups or just help the body get back in balance," says Roberta Perry, the founder of the Farmingdale, N.Y.-based Scrubz-Body Skin Care Products. "All of these are great for skin and overall health."

These vitamins aid in beauty by fighting some of the biggest factors that contribute to aging of the skin: dryness, inflammation and loss of elasticity.

"Vitamins C and E may work together to help protect the skin from sun damage due to their believed antioxidant properties," says Ysabel Montemayor, a registered dietitian and the nutrition director for Fresh n' Lean, an organic ready-to-eat meal-delivery service based in Santa Monica, Calif. "Vitamin A helps repair and maintain skin tissue. Omegas 3 and 6 fatty



acids may help prevent dry and inflamed skin. ... Vitamin D has roles in skin and hair, and a deficiency may be linked to hair loss and aging skin."

In addition to vitamins A, C, D and E, other significant contributors to skin health include bioflavonoids, grape-seed extract and pine bark extract, says Samantha Manka-Segal, owner of the Los Angeles-based Clear Balance Acupuncture.

"Bioflavonoids are what give plants their vibrant colors," Manka-Segal says. "They can significantly help reduce wrinkles and help rejuvenate skin cells by neutralizing oxidation."

Some of these minerals can be found in supplement form and in foods, says Angie Kuhn, a registered dietitian nutritionist and the director of research and nutrition at Persona, a personalized vitamin company.

"Collagen is a protein found in skin and tendons that provides structure to the cells, so it makes sense that supplementation shows it

significantly increases skin elasticity and has a positive influence on skin moisture levels," Kuhn says.

Collagen is found in bone broth, salmon, eggs and leafy greens.

CoQ10 also may help the skin by acting as an antioxidant. Meats, broccoli and dark leafy greens all have CoQ10, Kuhn says, but not a huge amount. The CoQ10 found in food isn't enough to significantly increase CoQ10 levels in your body, the Mayo Clinic notes.

Kuhn emphasizes that supplements are exactly that — a supplement to a healthy diet.

"First and foremost, dietary supplements are not intended to cure any condition," Kuhn says. "They are designed to supplement a well-balanced and nutritious diet. Nutrition research suggests that Americans are lacking key nutrients on a day-to-day basis due to fast, convenient and processed foods. This is where dietary supplements can help support overall nutrition."