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Peaceful Skin Nutrition Guide

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Soothe Your Skin & Calm Inflammation with Delicious Self Care





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Answering the Call from Your Skin

Your skin is a sacred gift. It holds together the miracle of your body. It protects the ecosystem of your cells. It blesses you with the pleasure of touch. And, as we'll explore in this guide, it illuminates truths hidden beneath the surface.

When your body is out of balance or threatened, **your skin is one of the first warning signs you'll receive.** Inflamed skin is your body calling out for support. You could think of it as a biological *check engine* light. The “engine” in need of checking might be your stress level, nutrition, lymphatic build-up, sleep quality, the toxicity of your cleaning supplies, or overall self-care.

One of the biggest *lifestyle levers* you can pull to calm your skin is nutrition. Seborrheic dermatitis, dandruff, malassezia overgrowth, and many other skin conditions are closely connected to inflammation. The substances we put into our mouths can be extremely inflammatory or powerfully anti-inflammatory.

This guide is designed to help you reduce inflammation while increasing the nutrient density of your diet, so your body can enjoy the vitamins, minerals, fatty acids, and amino acids it needs to thrive. As a result, our intention is for you to experience clearer, calmer skin with fewer flare-ups and less anxiety.

The Bond Between Inflammation & Irritated Skin

Seborrheic dermatitis, eczema, dandruff, and psoriasis are known by experts as “chronic inflammatory skin conditions.” Systemic (aka bodily) inflammation seems to be closely tied to the frequency and severity of skin symptoms. There also seems to be a connection between seborrheic dermatitis and metabolic syndrome [\[source\]](#). Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of conditions (including excess weight, chronic stress, and lack of exercise) which increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Multiple studies show a direct connection and possible causation between metabolic syndrome and chronic inflammation [\[source\]](#) [\[source\]](#).

In other words, if you are experiencing chronic inflammation from stress, excess weight, and processed foods, you might see that inflammation reflected in your skin through flare-ups and break-outs. On the other hand, reducing inflammation and reversing metabolic syndrome could lead to fewer flare-ups and calmer skin.

At this point, there aren't many studies observing the direct role that diet plays with seborrheic dermatitis and malassezia-based skin conditions. This is partly because most studies are funded by pharmaceutical companies, and none of them want to research the efficacy of organic foods or a low-carb diet.

In this guide, we will focus on **reducing inflammation** through diet and lifestyle, while sprinkling in the limited research specific to seborrheic dermatitis.

If you don't have seborrheic dermatitis, dandruff, or a malassezia-based skin condition, the insights in this guide will still prove valuable. Skin disorders like psoriasis, eczema, and rosacea also seem to be closely connected to systemic inflammation. Reducing inflammation, increasing micronutrients, and removing problematic foods will likely lead to more peaceful skin and peace of mind.



Medical Disclaimer + Managing Expectations

The information in this guide is not intended to diagnose, treat, or cure any medical or skin condition. It is not medical advice. Legally, we encourage you to speak with a medical professional before making any major changes to your diet or lifestyle.

The purpose of this guide is to provide useful information along the path toward lowering chronic inflammation through nutrition and lifestyle changes. In no way are we promising that your irritated skin will be completely healed if you follow the wisdom in these pages. We wish we could, but every situation is too unique and results will always vary.

Our hope is that by avoiding inflammatory foods, adding more nutrients, and amplifying your self care, you will notice a gradual improvement in the health and peace of your skin. And as a bonus (like monk fruit icing on a gluten free cake), we hope you will also experience benefits beyond your skin - including less stress, clearer thinking, a brighter mood, easier digestion, elevated energy, and more.

Peaceful Skin Requires Experimenting

Every *body* is unique. Only you will be able to identify which foods and supplements resonate with your body and which ones are not the right fit. We do our best to recommend foods that are safe and nourishing for *most* people. However, some of these foods might not work for you, based on intolerances, genetics, or dietary preference.

Imagine this experimentation as a joyful process of self-care. Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the options, see it as *cultivating your relationship with your body*. Like any relationship, the goal is to learn more about each other over time. Your spirit was not given a user manual when you inhabited your body. Mastering the art of self-love will require experimentation, reflection, and listening within.

The wisdom we share here is based on our best research, personal experiences, and insights from others in the malassezia and Dermazen community. We encourage you to conduct your own research, listen to your body, and make changes slowly, especially if you feel concerned about the consequences.

Self-care begins by checking in with yourself before anyone else. While you are the author of your health, we are honored to offer inspiration, insight, and support along the way.



Herbivores, Omnivores, & Carnivores

While all Dermazen products are vegan and cruelty-free, we keep an open mind when it comes to nutrition. We cannot deny the nutrient density of grass-fed, wild-caught, and pastured-raised animal products. Animal-based foods often contain more bioavailable forms of vitamins and minerals. They're also free of antinutrients like gluten, phytic acid, oxalates, and lectins.

The truth is, some people function better when they include meat, eggs, and occasional dairy in their diets compared to a fully plant-based lifestyle. Nutrition coach [Rob Stuart](#) is an example of someone who started his skin-healing journey with a plant-based approach, but later found it much easier to maintain peaceful skin through an animal-based diet.

Other folks choose to abstain from animal products for a number of reasons. Several members of the Dermazen team prefer a plant-based lifestyle. We understand the decision to live in harmony with all creatures by keeping them (and their byproducts) off of your plate. Whatever path you choose to take, we honor your healing journey.

Some of the dietary suggestions include foods from well-raised animals. If you prefer a plant-based lifestyle, we also provide many vegan and vegetarian options for proteins, fats, and carbs.

Avoiding the 7 Main Offenders

Not all food is created equally. If the key to peaceful skin is reducing inflammation (while increasing nutrients), let's start by exploring the most inflammatory foods which could be standing between you and calmer skin.

Remember, every *body* is unique. Some of these foods might be tolerable for you. The problem is most of these foods are so ingrained in our culture, you might not know what life is like *without* these troublemakers.

For instance, you might tell yourself, "I can handle gluten and canola oil just fine." At the same time, you might also be living with symptoms of chronic inflammation like irritated skin, fatigue, fluctuating hormones, and stubborn weight. If you've never gone more than a month without gluten, canola oil, or any of the *main offenders* below, there's no way to know if they are secretly causing your chronic symptoms.

In other words, even if you seem to tolerate some of the offenders because you don't experience *immediate* discomfort in your digestive system, they might be causing chronic low-grade inflammation which amplifies your symptoms.

The only way to know which foods are best for you is to experiment. You might consider researching how to test for food sensitivities through an elimination diet. It might also be worth investing in a nutritionist to walk you through a food sensitivity testing process. We'll discuss intuitive eating a few pages from now, but the bottom line is to listen to your body as you add and remove foods slowly over time.

Once again, this is not nutritional or medical advice. We're not advising you to give up any of these foods. The best we can do is highlight foods which *tend* to cause inflammation and skin flare-ups for *most* people. What you choose to do with this information is up to you and your intuition.



1. Seed Oils

These might be the sneakiest of the *Main Offenders* because they sound harmless and they are hidden in plain sight everywhere. These inflammatory lipids include **canola oil** (also known as rapeseed oil), **vegetable oil**, **safflower oil**, **soybean oil**, and **corn oil**. These are highly processed and denatured oils that are cheap to produce, but harmful to consume for a number of reasons. First, they are full of omega-6 fatty acids. Most bodies function best with a ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 close to 4:1. This is what we observe in hunter-gatherers who show lower levels of inflammation. While the average Westerner has a ratio closer to 16:1. There are several studies showing an increase of omega-6 consumption leads to increased inflammation [\[source\]](#) [\[source\]](#).

Seed oils are also harmful because they oxidize quickly when exposed to heat. When these oils are heated, they create two harmful substances—trans fats and lipid peroxides—which have been shown to increase rates of type 2 diabetes and heart disease, damage DNA, and accelerate aging. These oils are also full of harmful additives like BHT, BHA, and TBHQ have hormone-disrupting, carcinogenic, and immune-stunting effects. TBHQ even seems to increase food allergies [\[source\]](#), which can then inflame the skin even more.

Safer Alternatives:

Fortunately, there are plenty of healthier options available. Instead of cooking with inflammatory vegetable or canola oil, you can reach for coconut oil, avocado oil, ghee, and sesame oil. Olive oil is fine for low temperatures (like salad dressings) but it oxidizes quickly when heated, so it's not ideal for cooking.



2. Sugar

This sweet culprit has also snuck its way into almost all processed foods. You'll find added sugar in sauces, breads, granola bars, chips, yogurt, salad dressing, and many other daily staples in most Western diets. A systematic review from 2018 showed people who consume more sugar in their diets have more inflammatory markers in their blood, specifically C-reactive protein [\[source\]](#). Excess sugar can also combine with proteins and fats to create Advanced Glycation End Products (AGEs) which can cause inflammation. Too much sugar can also lead to insulin resistance and weight gain, both of which have shown to raise inflammation.

But sugar alone isn't a villain. Your body needs glucose to function. The problem is most people consume more sugar than they realize. The goal is to become aware of how much sugar you're getting on a daily basis, and gradually reduce your intake.

Safer Alternatives:

You can still enjoy sweet foods. It's a good idea to choose sweeteners lower on the glycemic index (which measures how much a particular food will likely spike your blood sugar). Raw honey and organic maple syrup have a lower glycemic index than table sugar (also known as sucrose). Coconut sugar is even lower on the glycemic index. You can also lower your sugar consumption by reaching for zero-sugar sweeteners like stevia, xylitol, erythritol, and monk fruit powder. We don't recommend artificial sweeteners like sucralose or aspartame (popularly used in diet sodas and "sugar free" foods) because they have shown to destroy healthy gut bacteria and can lead to long-term weight gain, chronic headaches, and more.

Self-Care Wisdom: It's also important to see food as a mirror for your life. If you find yourself reaching for sweets, it's an opportunity to ask yourself, "Where am I missing sweetness in my life? Is there an area where I'm being unkind to my inner child?" If we're lacking emotional or spiritual sweetness in our lives, we will often fill the void with sugar. Metaphorical sweetness could look like writing a love letter to your inner child, giving yourself time for a hobby, spending time with people who fill your emotional cup, playing with a child or animal, getting a massage, etc. You deserve healthy forms of sweetness.



3. Gluten

Even if you aren't "gluten intolerant," this protein could be causing more harm than you realize. Gliadin (a by-product of gluten) has shown to damage the intestinal lining of anyone who consumes it—not just those with celiac disease—according to a study published in 2015 [\[source\]](#) and research conducted by [Dr. Tom O'Bryan](#). When your intestinal tract is damaged, food and waste particles slip into your bloodstream more easily. This creates chronic inflammation.

Search for "gluten" in the [r/SebDerm](#) subreddit and you'll find dozens of people who have cleared or reduced their seborrheic dermatitis symptoms after eliminating gluten from their diets. This isn't a miracle cure for everyone, but if your skin is chronically inflamed, you might want to consider avoiding gluten.

The books [Wheat Belly](#) and [Grain Brain](#) offer a compelling look at why gluten and wheat aren't doing us any favors. From brain fog and weight gain to digestive distress, modern unfermented wheat can cause a cascade of side effects—even for folks without an official allergy.

Safer Alternatives:

Gluten-free options have improved significantly over the past few decades. It's much easier to avoid wheat than it was 20 years ago. The key is to remember that gluten-free doesn't mean "healthy." Gluten-free cookies loaded with sugar and seed oils can still cause inflammation. But when you need a treat (or a pizza), there are plenty of wheat-free options. When possible, reach for foods that are naturally gluten free like white rice, potatoes, yams, cassava flour, etc.

4. Artificial Trans Fats

Fried food is delicious. The combination of a crispy crunch with satiating fat is hard to resist. Unfortunately, the artificial trans fats in most fried foods is a major source of inflammation. Natural trans fats found in unprocessed animal products don't seem to cause harm [\[source\]](#) [\[source\]](#). The real danger occurs when vegetable oils are chemically altered through heat, hydrogenation, or other additives.

Beyond fried food, keep an eye out for *hydrogenated oils* in the ingredients of your groceries. Food manufacturers will hydrogenate oils (by adding hydrogen to the fatty acids) to make them solid at room temperatures. However, this process turns the oils into trans fats. Trans fats have shown to damage heart health [\[source\]](#) [\[source\]](#), alter insulin sensitivity [\[source\]](#), damage blood vessels [\[source\]](#), and more.

Safer Alternatives:

Replace margarine and hydrogenated cooking oils with coconut oil, avocado oil, ghee, and grass-fed butter. When eating outside your home, avoid fried food. Consider investing in an air fryer for your home if you crave the texture of fried food. An air fryer will allow you to enjoy that crispy crunch and satiating fat with a healthier oil of your choice.



5. Alcohol

Believe it or not, alcohol isn't your friend. Sure, it can lighten the mood and take the edge off temporarily. But it can also spike inflammation [\[source\]](#), damage your gut lining [\[source\]](#), and feed harmful bacteria in your microbiome [\[source\]](#) - along with several other side effects.

When it comes to skin health, alcohol tends to dehydrate skin cells and accelerate the aging process. It can also reduce elasticity, increase the size of pores, and make your skin look puffy.

Once again, everybody will tolerate alcohol differently. For some, the effects are minimal and the occasional drink won't flare up their skin. For others, even half a drink can cause an outbreak the next day. At the very least, it's a good idea to be mindful of the consequences and consider healthier forms of relaxation.

Safer Alternatives:

Many folks have found CBD - with or without THC - or herbs like [kava](#) to be more holistic paths to relax and improve their mood. If your main goal is to relax after a long day, you could also try a calming elixir invented by one of Dermazen's founders by combining magnesium powder, glycine, and GABA into warm water or tea (following the serving size of each ingredient). It's remarkably calming.

The choice to limit or eliminate alcohol is also a great opportunity to connect with yourself and ask why you desire to drink in the first place. Let's be clear: there's nothing wrong with wanting a drink. The motivation behind the drink is what matters. If you find yourself *needing* alcohol at the end of each day, it's an invitation to explore whether the elements of your day are serving you. Maybe your job is unfulfilling or your close relationships are strained. Alcohol numbs us to turn down the volume of our uncomfortable feelings. But often those feelings are here to serve us, wake us up, and call us toward a more peaceful and rewarding life. Over time, the goal is to create a life we don't need to escape from. You are worthy of that.



6. Processed Meat

Not all animal products are harmful. But it's hard to deny the link between consuming large amounts of processed meat and higher levels of inflammation. Processed meat has been treated in some way to flavor or preserve it through salting, curing, fermenting, and smoking. This includes bacon, sausages, hot dogs, deli meat, and other cured meats like salami. Most of the harm comes from the nitrates, nitrites, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PHAs), heterocyclic amines (HCAs), and chemicals added to the meat during the manufacturing process.

Many of these additives are known for being carcinogenic or cancer-causing. Processed meat also tends to have a much higher concentration of omega-6 fat over the healthier omega-3. Similar to the seed oils listed earlier, this creates elevated levels of inflammation in the body and can lead to inflamed skin.

Safer Alternatives:

If you're going to consume animal products, it's worth investing in grass-fed, free-range, wild-caught, and/or pasture-raised meat, fish, and eggs. These are much higher in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and other nutrients. When it comes to animal products, it's best to choose quality over quantity. For example, you might choose to eat higher quality animal products at home, while ordering more plant-based meals when dining out, since meat quality tends to be lower at restaurants. Of course, you might also consider a plant-based lifestyle at home too. Mother Nature is full of nutritious plants and fungi that taste delicious without all the chemicals found in processed meat.

7. Dairy

This “main offender” is controversial. Dairy has often been associated with inflammation, but a peer-reviewed analysis of 27 randomized controlled trials revealed that dairy had a neutral or beneficial effect on inflammatory markers. In other words, the side effects some people experience most likely are not a result of inflammation.

However plenty of people still experience negative symptoms from too much dairy including worse skin, indigestion, and sinus phlegm. There are also plenty of people across the [Seb Derm Reddit](#) and several seborrheic dermatitis Facebook Groups who experienced a reduction in their symptoms when they eliminated dairy. For others, it didn't seem to make much of a difference.

Much of dairy's controversial nature seems to be related to ancestry. Some groups of people have consumed dairy for thousands of years, while others have not evolved to tolerate casein and whey protein as easily. It might take experimentation to find out if dairy is problematic for you.

There's also the issue of pasteurization. In its original form, raw milk contains enzymes like lactase which help digest the sugar in milk (called lactose). While pasteurization can kill potentially harmful bacteria, it also denatures proteins, destroys enzymes, reduces vitamins, and kills beneficial probiotics. So when someone claims to be *lactose intolerant*, in reality, they were never supposed to digest lactose without the lactase enzyme naturally present in raw milk.

Safer Alternatives:

There are plenty of plant-based milk products available if you choose to avoid dairy. The key is to watch out for those inflammatory seed oils we mentioned above. Make sure your plant-based milk doesn't contain sunflower, safflower, canola, grapeseed, cottonseed, corn, rice bran, or soybean oils as these will likely raise your inflammation and could trigger a flare-up. If you can find it, raw milk is becoming increasingly popular - especially raw cheese, which is much higher in vitamin K2. Raw milk farming practices are much cleaner and safer than they were before pasteurization was invented. So if you want to give raw milk a try, you're less likely to catch tuberculosis than your great-great-great grandparents.



A Bounty of Beautiful Choices

Let's take a moment to breathe. (Inhale...exhale...wonderful.)

After exposing all the inflammatory foods above, it might feel like your plate of options has shrunk drastically. But it's important to focus more on what you can enjoy, rather than what you want to avoid. There are still hundreds of nourishing, delicious options waiting to be savored by you.

Eliminating or reducing the seven Main Offenders might *seem* restrictive at first. That's because western diets have detoured so drastically far from what our bodies evolved to enjoy. Most of the food on store shelves would be unrecognizable to your great-great grandparents. All it takes is intention and practice to reprogram your taste buds and create a *new normal* filled with healthier options. Eventually, you won't miss the old foods or the inflamed skin they caused.





What to Focus On

When looking for nourishing meals, we do our best to focus on three key factors: nutrient density, absence of Main Offenders, and a greenlight from our body. You might choose a different set of criteria to guide you, but we'll offer these three as inspiration.

1. Nutrient Density: How many vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, omega-3's, and other nutrients are stored within the food? Whole eggs, cauliflower, green olives, and grass-fed steak are all nutritionally dense while a donut is only calorically dense with almost zero nutrients.

2. Absence of Main Offenders: Once you know a food has a solid amount of nutrients, give it a quick check for the Main Offenders. As long as it's free from (or low in) the seven main sources of inflammation, it should be safe to enjoy. Though we recommend one final test...

3. Greenlight from Your Body: Your digestive system, DNA, and microbiome are different from everyone else's. Only you will be able to know if a specific food is right for you. Listening to your body takes time and practice. Many of us have become deaf to the whispers of our intuition. Over time we can learn to notice which foods upset our stomach, which foods cause flare-ups, which foods disrupt our peace of mind, etc.

The Joys of Intuitive Eating

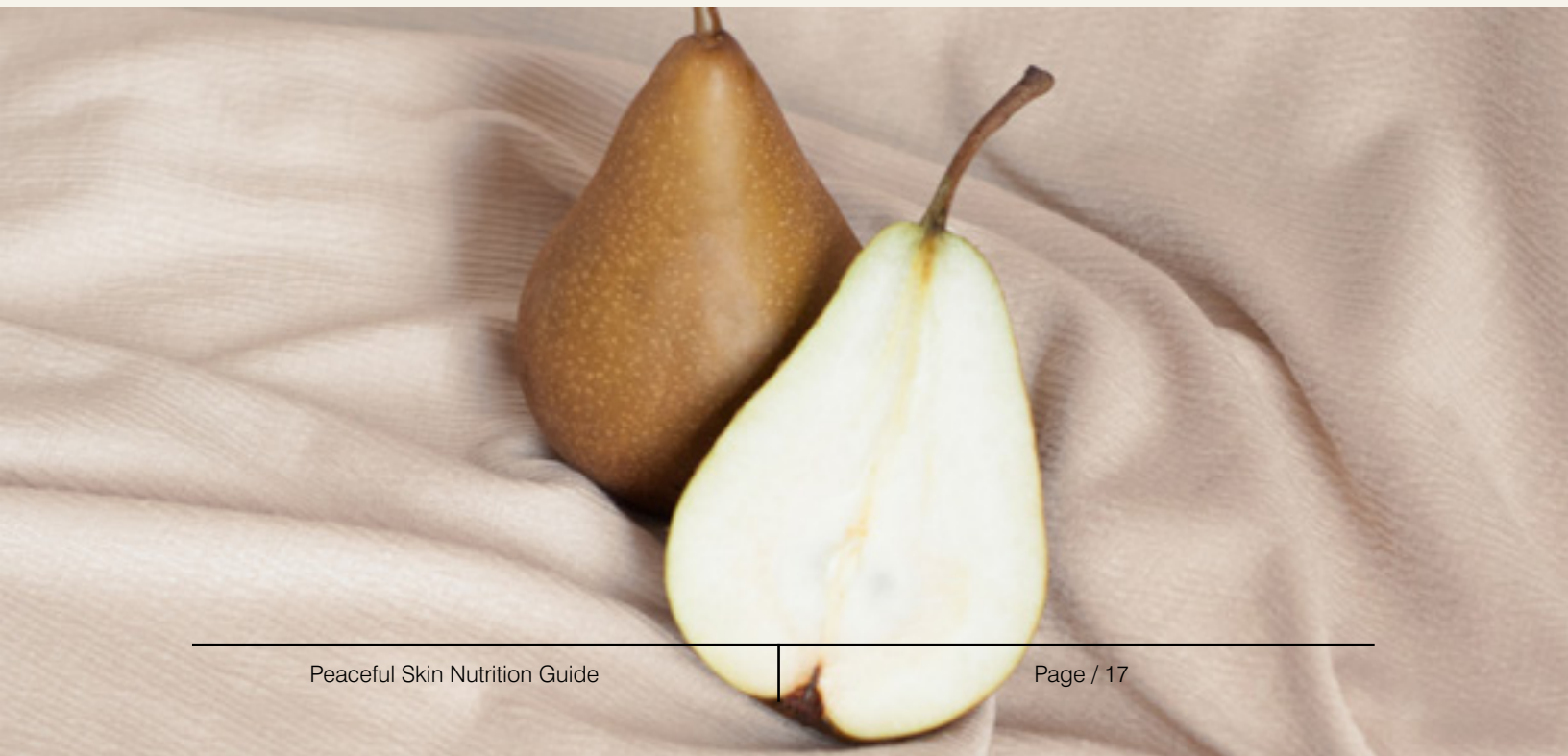
[Intuitive eating](#) is a style of nutrition that follows your own intuition and body-wisdom rather than a specific diet or regimen. It's become more popular over the last decade for good reason. Intuitive eating is more enjoyable, less rigid, more sustainable, and more empathetic than a black-and-white diet or meal plan.

Health is a relationship with your body. And no relationship can thrive if one side never listens.

How and when are you listening to your body? Even if you choose to follow a specific diet or meal plan, create time and space to visit with your inner wisdom. Check in with your organs and cells to ask what they need and how you can support them.

To learn more about intuitive eating, take a look at some of these resources...

- Book: [Intuitive Eating: A Revolutionary Anti-Diet Approach](#)
- Book: [The Intuitive Eating Guide to Recovery: Let Go of Toxic Diet Culture, Reconnect with Food, and Build Self-Love](#)
- Book: [Anti-Diet: Reclaim Your Time, Money, Well-Being, and Happiness Through Intuitive Eating](#)
- Podcast: [Food Psych](#)
- Podcast: [Don't Salt My Game](#)





The Peaceful Skin Nutrition Hierarchy

We organized a plethora of food options into three tiers based on their likelihood to increase or reduce chronic inflammation.

By no means are we suggesting you have to avoid foods in Tier 3 forever. Remember, every *body* is unique and this is not medical advice. We're simply doing our best to simplify the research around food's impact on inflammation.

This is also not a complete list. There are plenty of foods not listed here, and we encourage you to continue your own research on specific foods missing from these charts. The three categories below are designed to give you a foundation to build on top of.

We believe eating more of Tier 1 and less of the Tier 2 foods will result in lower chronic inflammation and more vitality, health, and peaceful skin.

Carbohydrates

Tier 1 / Mostly Beneficial		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• White rice• Fruit (all forms)*• Cauliflower• Pumpkin• Green beans• Cassava flour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sweet potatoes / Yams• Potatoes• Mushrooms• Carrots• Parsnips• Lentils / Beans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Squash• Broccoli• Asparagus• Artichokes• Quinoa• Raw honey
Tier 2 / Mostly Neutral		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brown rice• Agave	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maple syrup• Gluten-free grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gluten-free oats
Tier 3 / Mostly Inflammatory		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wheat• Corn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cane sugar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High fructose corn syrup

* A [study from 2019](#) showed that an increase in fruit consumption was associated with a reduction in seborrheic dermatitis symptoms.



Fats

Tier 1 / Mostly Beneficial		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avocado / Avocado oil • Coconut / Coconut oil • Beef and lamb (grass-fed) • Salmon (wild-caught) • Bone broth (grass-fed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olives / Olive oil (unheated) • Ghee (grass-fed) • Macadamia nuts • Hemp seeds • Dark chocolate / Cacao 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eggs (pastured) • Sardines (wild-caught) • Brazil nuts • Chia seeds
Tier 1 / Mostly Beneficial		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dairy • Most nuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pork (pastured)** • Most seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken (pastured)**
Tier 3 / Mostly Inflammatory		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canola oil • Peanuts • Beef (factory farmed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable oil • Soybean oil • Pork (factory farmed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margarine / Crisco • Salmon (farmed) • Chicken (factory farmed)





Proteins

Tier 1 / Mostly Beneficial		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collagen (grass-fed) • Hemp seeds • Lentils • Salmon (wild-caught) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant-based protein powder • Peas / Pea protein • Beef and lamb (grassfed) • Beans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spirulina • Sardines (wild-caught) • Bone broth (grass-fed) • Eggs (pastured)
Tier 1 / Mostly Beneficial		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grass-fed whey protein • Chicken (pastured)** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most nuts • Pork (pastured)** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most seeds
Tier 3 / Mostly Inflammatory		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low quality whey protein • Chicken (conventional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beef (conventional) • Salmon (farmed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pork (conventional)

** Chicken and pork tend to be much higher in omega-6 fatty acids. For this reason, we moved even high quality pastured chicken and pork to the yellow tier. They can still be nourishing, but they won't lower inflammation as much as quality red meat.



Nutrients for Peaceful Skin

Your body requires vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and hormones to thrive. When these building blocks are missing, trouble arises in the form of low energy, chronic inflammation, disease, irritated skin, and more. A hard truth to face is most of us need to supplement select nutrients in order to live optimally. Modern soil has been depleted due to overuse and monoculture practices. Fortunately, supplements exist to help make up the difference.

Medical Reminder: Once again, the information below is not medical advice. We are not claiming that any of these nutrients can cure or treat any specific condition or symptom. We are not advising you to add them into your routine without consulting a medical or nutrition professional. The information below is meant to share promising research and potential benefits to be gained from these nutrients.

That being said, here are eight nutrients worth considering, based on their likelihood to improve skin health and support lower levels of inflammation.

Vitamin D3 (with K2)

Vitamin D3 is produced internally when your skin is exposed to sunlight. Unfortunately, most people are deficient due to prolonged periods spent indoors. This deficiency seems to affect people with seborrheic dermatitis more than others. In 2016, [one study](#) discovered that oral supplementation of vitamin D *significantly* reduced the occurrence of seborrheic dermatitis flare-ups if participants were deficient. [A 2021 study](#) found that vitamin D deficiencies are much more common in people with seborrheic dermatitis than symptom-free individuals. Here is [one more study](#) showing the same correlation between vitamin D deficiency and seborrheic dermatitis.

If you search for “vitamin D” in the r/SebDerm subreddit, you will find dozens of people who found significant improvement from increasing their vitamin D levels. However, not everyone experiences a change in their symptoms. The good news is even if your skin doesn’t improve directly, vitamin D3 still has amazing benefits for the rest of your body. Beyond managing skin cell replication and the maintenance of the skin barrier (as shown here), vitamin D is also essential for an elevated mood, strong immunity, healthy bone development, muscle function, sleep, cognitive health, and more.

The Importance of K2:

If you are going to supplement with vitamin D3, especially at higher levels, then it’s important to also consume vitamin K2. This is because vitamin D increases the absorption of calcium, while K2 moves the calcium out of your arteries and into your bones and teeth where it belongs. Based on our research, there is no evidence that it is possible to overdose on vitamin D if you are simultaneously consuming adequate levels of K2. Vitamin D overdoses only seem to occur in the absence of K2.

For legal reasons, we will not advise you to megadose D3. However, there are many accounts of people consuming large doses of D3 without side effects. In a [2014 study](#), researchers gave patients over 300,000 IU of D3 in one sitting. Vitamin D is fat soluble, so gets stored in your fat cells and can be used overtime - unlike water soluble vitamins like C and B which need to be taken in small, regular doses (otherwise your body will urinate the excess).

Personal Story: Dermazen co-founder, Austin, was taking 5,000 IU of D3 daily for over a year with no noticeable improvement to his skin. When he learned about megadosing, he increased his D3 consumption to 50,000 IU a day for a week (with 500 micrograms of K2). Only *then* did he see his symptoms disappear without any topical treatment. He lowered his dose to 20,000 IU/day (still considered to be a megadose) for several months and his skin remained peaceful and symptom-free until he gradually fell out of the habit of taking D3 daily.



Zinc

Your body cannot synthesize zinc on its own. And hence, you'll need to obtain this essential nutrient from food and supplements. Not only is this mineral a key player in metabolism, nerve function, and digestion, but it is also fundamental to your skin's health. In fact, [a 2019 study](#) demonstrated that participants with seborrheic dermatitis had significantly lower levels of zinc in their bodies compared to those with healthy, normal skin. This moody skin antidote possesses anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antioxidant properties that [have shown](#) to foster better skin healing and recovery. If your skin is constantly acting up, supplementing with 15–30 mg of zinc daily (especially with 1-2mg of copper) may help soothe and calm your outermost layer.

Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM)

MSM is a sulfur-containing compound naturally present in plants and humans. It can also be consumed as a dietary supplement commonly used to reduce inflammatory conditions such as osteoarthritis. Additionally, two studies in [2020](#) and [2015](#) discovered that MSM supplementation significantly improved skin elasticity, hydration, firmness, and tone, in addition to reducing facial wrinkles. You can't fully turn back the clock, but MSM can slow the hands of time by enhancing skin barrier strength, increasing collagen production, and protecting cells in the outer layers of your skin. [Research](#) suggests a dose of 1g per day is enough to make a visual difference on the skin's appearance.

Vitamin E

Vitamin E is another fat-soluble vitamin highly acclaimed for its potent antioxidant effects. Beyond supporting your vision, brain, lungs, heart, and liver, this nutrient may also safeguard your skin from the effects of UV rays, aging, and inflammation. In addition to that, [research](#) has suggested a possible link between vitamin E deficiency and the development of seborrheic dermatitis. Hence, if you always find yourself in a tug-of-war with flare-ups and inflammation, it might be worth supplementing with vitamin E at doses ranging from 100mg to 500mg per day.





Biotin

Biotin is typically marketed as a supplement for stronger nails, luscious locks, and flawless skin, and it's no wonder why. In 2021, [one study](#) revealed that biotin supplementation successfully reduced fine lines, wrinkles, and skin roughness while enhancing participants' skin texture and appearance. Drawing from those results, researchers hypothesized that biotin supplements might improve blood flow and nutrient delivery to the skin, elevating its overall appearance, health, and complexion. Doses of around 30mcg (micrograms, not milligrams) daily may help you achieve brighter, happier skin, though there's no widely accepted dosing regimen as of yet.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C is an essential water-soluble vitamin that plays a crucial role in the development and repair of your tissues. And due to its impressive antioxidant effects, vitamin C can fortify your heart's health, bolster your immune system's function, and help prevent gout attacks. Two studies in [2015](#) and [2016](#) investigated the effects of supplements containing vitamin C on the skin. Based on the results, these supplements significantly improved skin hydration, elasticity, and smoothness in participants. If you'd like to reap the numerous health benefits of vitamin C, 75-90mg per day should suffice, though [research](#) suggests many adults can take up to 2000mg a day.





Probiotics

Bacteria often get a bad rep, but some strains play an important role in human health. Though probiotics are widely-praised for their gut health benefits, these supplements may also help reduce skin ailments. For instance, [one study](#) found that participants who consumed probiotics daily improved their scalp dandruff and seborrhea symptoms while reducing scalp inflammation. As a result, researchers concluded that probiotics help restore the balanced ecosystem of microorganisms residing on your scalp. Other [research](#) shows probiotics could enhance skin barrier and immune function. Dosing of probiotics varies rapidly based on the numbers of species present, the amount of colony forming units (CFU), and overall strength of the strains. While we don't have an affiliation with them, [Just Thrive's Probiotic](#) is the first choice for many of Dermazen's team members due to its ability to survive past stomach acid. However, you might need to experiment with a few types of probiotics to find the best choice for your body.

Hyaluronic Acid

This natural substance serves as a cushion and lubricant in your eyes and joints. Currently, the claimed benefits of supplemental hyaluronic acid (HA) are vast—from relieving dry eyes to battling acid reflux symptoms and joint pain. However, the effects of HA on the skin should not be ignored. In 2017, a [study](#) found that oral supplementation of HA increased skin hydration and elasticity and reduced skin roughness and wrinkle depth. Nicknamed 'Nature's Moisturizer,' HA plays a vital role in preserving tissue hydration. It also facilitates the transport of nutrients and ions to the outermost layer of the skin, owing to its powerful water-retaining properties. Most research recommends a daily dosage of around 100-200mg of HA for adults.



Herbs that Lower Inflammation & Improve Skin

Much of the healing process relies on the *removal* of harm. Once you eliminate the Main Offenders, reduce stress, and increase the nutrient density of your meals, your body is remarkably intuitive and capable of healing on its own.

However, you can support and enhance your body's healing journey through a variety of herbs. The potent botanicals listed below have shown to reduce inflammation, improve the health of skin, or both. You might consider adding a few of them to your daily routine.





Ginger

This spicy root has been used in China for thousands of years. Herbalists often prescribe ginger to soothe upset stomachs, balance blood sugar, reduce various kinds of pain, and more. In a [2016 study](#), ginger significantly reduced inflammation in patients who received an extract. A [2010 study](#) found that consuming ginger with turmeric improved the skin's appearance and its ability to heal. You can easily add this root to your life by drinking ginger tea, adding ginger slices to your home-cooked meals, or by consuming capsules of ginger extract.

Turmeric

Most common in India, turmeric has been a long-standing staple of ayurvedic medicine. It's also one of the most studied herbs on the planet. Turmeric and its active compound, *curcumin*, have been shown to lower inflammation, slow the growth of tumors, balance hormones and blood sugar, and more. As mentioned above, turmeric (when combined with ginger) also improves the skin's appearance and ability to heal. The key with turmeric is to combine it with black pepper (or its extract, bioperine) which can increase curcumin absorption by 2,000%. As long as you are adding black pepper to the mix, you can add turmeric to your cooking or take a capsule or two each day.

Green Tea

Green tea is one of the most widely-consumed beverages worldwide. This ancient elixir is packed with polyphenols (also known as plant micronutrients) that have potent antioxidant effects. One [2005 study](#) demonstrated that topical and oral green tea supplementation improved the skin's elasticity. Another [2011 study](#) found that green tea polyphenols protected the skin against the damaging effects of UV radiation, enhanced skin elasticity and hydration, and helped maintain optimal skin structure and function. For most people, drinking 1-3 cups of green tea daily, preferably in the morning or before working out, is a great way to improve skin health and overall energy.



Hibiscus

Due to its brightly colored large flowers, the hibiscus is typically cultivated as an ornamental plant. Beyond its captivating beauty, the hibiscus plant has also been used as a soothing beverage in traditional medicinal therapy. A [2021 research review](#) showed that the anti-inflammatory and antioxidative compounds in hibiscus tea could help reduce the risk of chronic diseases. On top of that, [another 2021 study](#) suggested that both leaf and flower extracts fostered better skin healing, provided sun protection, and displayed anti-collagenase activity, hence, improving skin hydration, elasticity, and tensile strength. You can add hibiscus into your life with a few cups of tea each day or with an extract inside a tincture or capsule.

Olive Leaf

Olive leaves have been a part of the Mediterranean diet and traditional medicinal treatment for centuries. Olive leaf extract (OLE) is packed with key polyphenols that guard against chronic conditions like Type 2 diabetes and improve blood cholesterol and blood pressure. While different polyphenol compounds compete for the limelight, oleuropein steals the show as the key player responsible for OLE's impressive anti-inflammatory benefits as shown in [this study](#). A [promising animal study](#) demonstrated that oral consumption of OLE can prevent skin damage and premature aging due to sun exposure and help maintain skin elasticity. OLE can be consumed as a supplement, tea, or tincture. There's no hard and fast rule around how much to take, but the standard dosing seems to be 500-1000mg daily.



Calendula

Donned with bright yellow flowers, the calendula or pot marigold has anchored its roots in Ayurvedic and Unani systems of medicine. This plant is utilized to treat a range of skin conditions, such as diaper rash, wounds, pressure ulcers, inflammation, and vaginal yeast infections. One [animal-model study](#) found that the oral administration of the calendula extract successfully inhibited inflammation. Calendula can be consumed in a tea, supplement, or tincture. You can make calendula tea at home by steeping dried calendula in boiling water for 10-20 minutes. Calendula supplements are also available, though the optimum dosing range has yet to be confirmed, so it's best to follow the guidelines on the label.





Holy Basil

Holy basil or tulsi is a highly-valued herb native to India that has long assimilated into Ayurveda and rightfully earned several titles within this medical system, including “The Queen of Herbs” and the “Incomparable One.” [Research](#) suggests it could offer support for numerous conditions ranging from back pain and skin diseases to eye diseases, asthma, stress, and GI disorders. One [animal-model study](#) discovered that holy basil extract possessed significant anti-inflammatory activity, likely due to its flavonoids. You can add holy basil into your life through tea, tinctures, and capsules. Most experts agree that 500mg a day is safe for the majority of people.

Rose Petal

Roses are commonly referenced as an old-age symbol of love in movies, literature, and music. But beyond romantic gestures, roses have also been recognized for their health benefits as they are a strong source of vitamins A, C, E, iron, calcium, and antioxidant compounds. In 2015, [one study](#) showed that participants who consumed rosehip powder saw significant improvements in skin complexion, hydration, and elasticity after eight weeks of supplementation. Fresh rose petals can be incorporated into salads and beverages or dried and mixed into baked goods or granola. Other than that, you may opt for rosehip supplements at 500-1000mg doses.

Lifestyle Levers for Reducing Inflammation

While nutrition is a vital part of reducing chronic inflammation, it's not the only piece of the puzzle. Sleep, hydration, movement, and relaxation play a crucial role when creating peaceful skin and peace of mind.

Sleep

Healing requires sleep. Slumber provides us with sacred yin energy. This yin power embodies the divine feminine. Just like our mother's womb or the fertile soil of Mother Earth, the healing darkness of sleep regenerates our bodies and minds. Without nourishing sleep, our physical vessels cannot adapt and thrive. Unsurprisingly, sleep deprivation can increase your risk of inflammatory diseases. On top of that, long-term poor quality sleep can increase the pace of skin aging, deplete skin barrier function, and even distort the way you perceive your physical appearance.

Your body requires both quantity and quality of rest. As you've probably heard, most people function best on 7-9 hours of sleep. Quality of sleep is harder to measure without an Oura ring or a similar sleep tracker. But there are a handful of proven methods to improve both the length and depth of your sleep.

- Optimize your sleep environment by keeping your room dark, cool, and well-ventilated.
- Avoid blue and white light (including screens) an hour or two before getting into bed. Too much light will prevent your brain from producing melatonin - the hormone responsible for making you feel sleepy. You can use blue-light blocking glasses and red light bulbs to reduce light exposure.
- Instead of scrolling on your phone (which can cause stress and reduce melatonin), use the last hour or two of your night to read, journal, meditate, talk with a loved one, or massage yourself or another.
- End your caffeine intake by the early afternoon or at least six hours before your ideal bedtime.
- Expose yourself to direct sunlight within 30 minutes of waking to reset your circadian rhythm and balance your adrenal hormones.

Hydration

From regulating your body's temperature and keeping your joints lubricated to transporting nutrients throughout your body—water plays an immensely vital role in keeping you healthy. But on top of that, your daily fluid intake can also affect the condition of your skin. In a [2018 study](#), researchers found that participants who initially had lower consumption of water but increased their intake observed a reduction in skin dryness and roughness. Their skin elasticity and texture also improved over time.

But we know staying hydrated can be a challenge, especially amidst chaotic schedules and busy weekdays. Here are a few ways to stay hydrated more easily:

- Purchase a large reusable water bottle and keep it with you throughout the day. For extra support, you can choose a bottle with [markers on the side](#) indicating how empty the bottle should be at different times of the day.
- If water feels too boring, you can improve the taste by squeezing lemon, lime, or grapefruit into your bottle or by adding a teaspoon of apple cider vinegar. These will also enhance the health benefits of each sip.
- Place post-it notes or index cards around the house to remind yourself to drink water.
- Start the day hydrated by keeping a big glass of water on your nightstand and drinking all of it right when you wake up. For deeper hydration, you can add a teaspoon of [sole water](#) or other electrolytes.





Movement

Exercise is a powerful tool to lower inflammation. Studies conducted in [2014](#) and [2020](#) demonstrated that reducing sedentary time and increasing physical activity helps reduce inflammation levels as well as the risk of inflammatory conditions. An active lifestyle also provides [several benefits](#) directly to the skin.

Movement appears in infinite forms. If you don't enjoy running or going to the gym, don't force yourself into those boxes. Find the movement styles you love. And if you have never maintained a movement habit in the past, that old story doesn't need to define your future. Here are a few insights to give your body the gift of movement.

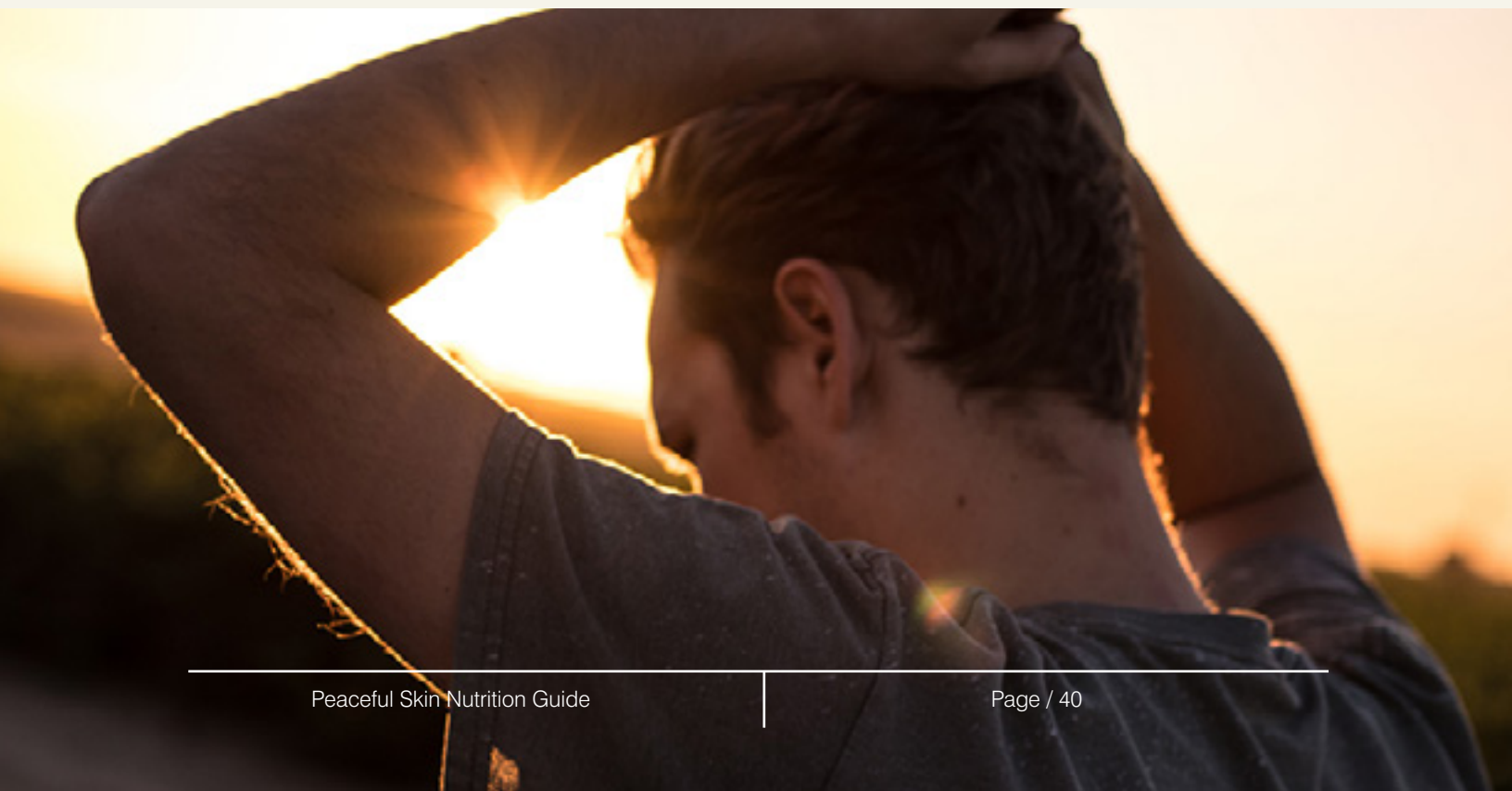
- Explore different forms of exercise to find the type of movement that fits your body and soul. It could be yoga, swimming, pickleball, rock climbing, jazzercise, kickboxing, tai chi, paddle boarding, biking, or hiking - just to name a few. You can take a class or reach out to a friend who regularly enjoys the activity.
- Find a buddy to move with. Research shows you are much more likely to stay consistent with exercise if you are doing it with a friend or even a hired coach.
- Ease into it. Stressing your body by doing too much too quickly can shock your subconscious, which might tempt you to return to the safety of your comfort zone. The goal is to find a new active routine that stimulates your body without exhausting you.
- Remind yourself of the benefits of movement. Forget about weight loss. Exercise grows new brain cells, improves memory, boosts mood, strengthens bones, increases mitochondrial health, reduces stress, lowers chronic inflammation, fortifies the immune system, regulates hormones, improves skin health, strengthens the heart, prevents injury, and more.

Stress

Nowadays, no one is a stranger to stress. Short-term stress evolved to be useful, giving us a quick burst of focus and energy while being chased by a tiger in the wild. The problem is we have been conditioned to believe we are surrounded by metaphorical tigers all day long. Most of us feel threatened by upcoming bills, short-tempered coworkers, traffic, fear pumped by mainstream media, unrealistic cultural expectations, and more.

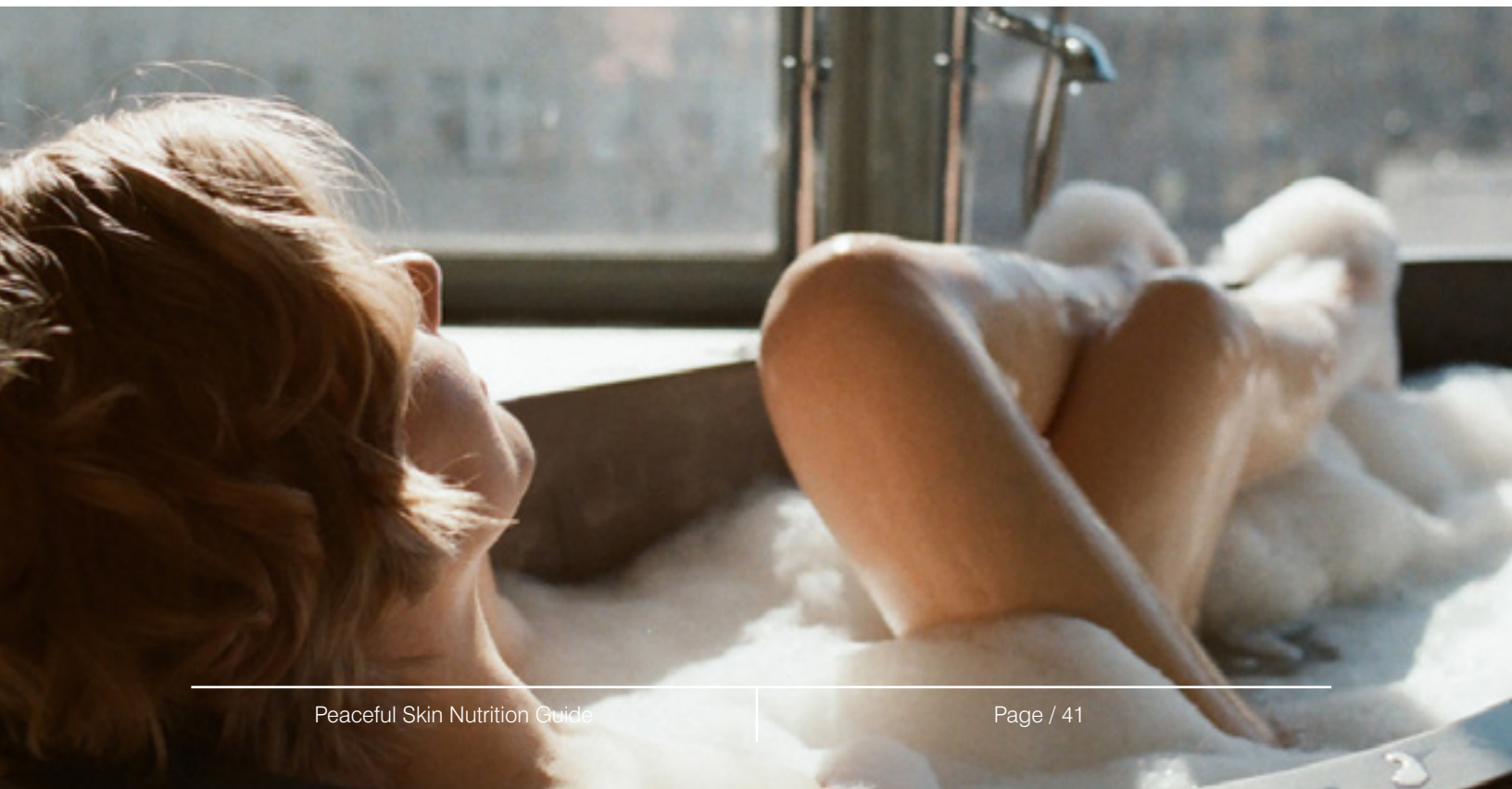
This chronic stress takes a major toll on our bodily inflammation and overall health. Researchers have found [strong evidence](#) that stress activates inflammatory responses in your brain and body. And yes, that includes your skin. A [2014 study](#) revealed that stress can aggravate and trigger skin ailments such as psoriasis, eczema, acne, and other conditions. Hence, many people experience flareups during seasons of stress and pressure. A [2020 study](#) also identified a connection between people with regular seborrheic dermatitis flare-ups and high levels of stress.

Stress activates your *fight, flight, or freeze mode*, also known as your sympathetic nervous system. The opposite mode is called *rest and digest*, or your parasympathetic nervous system. When your body is in a parasympathetic state, it fosters healing and recovery. But when your body is battling chronic stress, it assumes you're in danger and sends blood and nutrients to your limbs rather than your vital organs or damaged tissue. Hence, **lowering stress is essential to helping your body enter and stay in healing mode.**



So how can you reduce stress? We created a three-stage approach to managing stress. It includes reducing triggers *before* stress, practicing mindfulness *during* stress, and proactively recovering *after* stress.

- 1. Reducing Triggers:** You can lower your daily stress with healthier boundaries. Your energy is sacred and deserves to be protected. This could look like spending less time with people who frustrate you, reducing exposure to social and mainstream media, avoiding energy-zapping food, saying no to projects that don't fill you with joy, etc. The goal is to create loving boundaries around your emotional village so fewer tigers wander through the streets of your mind.
- 2. Practicing Mindfulness:** The story you make up about a situation changes your experience of it. If a coworker is yelling at you, you can make up the story that "They're right and I'm useless." This will lead to shame and stress. You can also choose a different story like, "This person is hurting inside and spreading their pain, but I deserve to be treated better than this." This story is just as valid (if not more so), reduces the amount of stress you feel, and fosters more self love. A large part of mindfulness is becoming aware of the stories we are believing and noticing the effect they have on us.
- 3. Proactively Recovering:** When stress does eventually build-up, you can choose to ignore it and unconsciously cope or you can consciously release the stress. Intentional recovery can take the form of deep breathing, talking with a therapist, journaling, practicing yoga, or many of the activities listed below in Self-Care. The goal is to shift back to the healing mode of the parasympathetic nervous system.



Self-Care

This lifestyle lever is closely related to stress, but it's such an important part of Dermazen's philosophy that it deserves its own section. We see self-care as more proactive and soulful than stress management. With self-care, you are developing greater appreciation for your body, mind, and soul and learning to enjoy your own company.



Self-care is the art of becoming your own best friend.

So what are the qualities of a great friend? They are attentive to your needs and desires, they laugh with you, they listen without judgment, they celebrate your gifts, they comfort you when emotional storms arise, they play with you, they hold you accountable with love.

You get to decide what it means to befriend yourself. It could mean exploring new hobbies, journaling as a way to listen to yourself, planning solo trips, spending time alone in nature, going to the farmers market, picking up a new novel, enjoying a spa day at home, taking yourself on dates, cooking a warm meal while listening to music you love, writing yourself love notes, and showing affection in your unique love languages. They're simple acts that strengthen trust, intuition, and connection overtime.

Every act of self-care reprograms your subconscious mind to remind you: you are worthy of good things. This shift ripples out into different areas of life - including your relationships. As such, you begin to live by higher standards for how you will be treated by others.

Over time you begin to create a life filled with less stress and more love.



Closing Thoughts

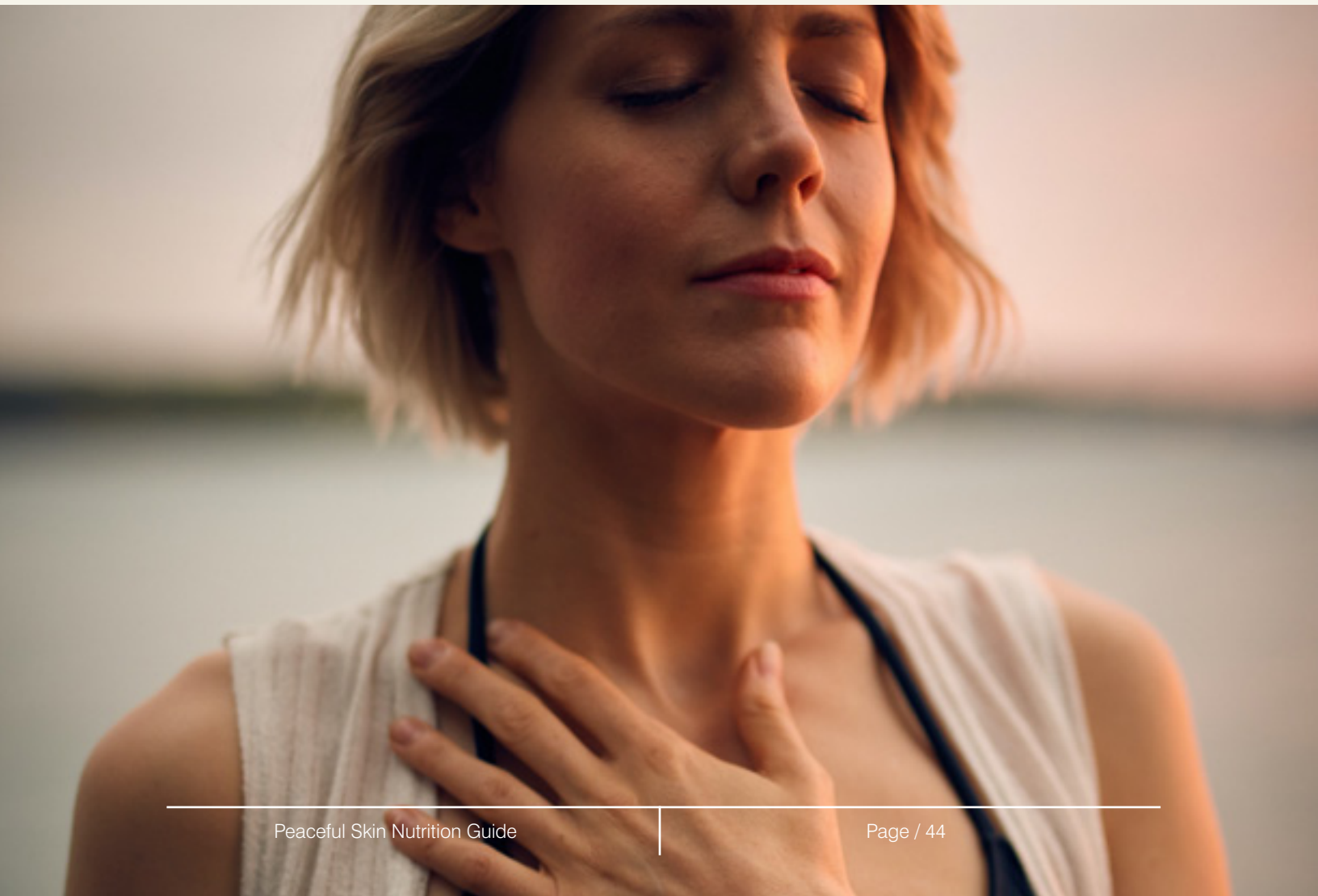
Peaceful skin and peace of mind are journeys. They are not one-time destinations, but a way of life. Cultivating calm skin and a clear mind invites us to live with intention and care.

The wisdom in this guide offers a solid foundation on which to rebuild the temple of your body - cell by cell, atom by atom, moment by moment.

Start by using and integrating the advice that calls to you most clearly. Save the rest for another season or another incarnation.

There are many paths to healing. If you are open, curious, and persistent, you will find the way reserved for you.

We are here to serve you along your sacred journey.



Peaceful Skin Meal Ideas

I. Breakfast

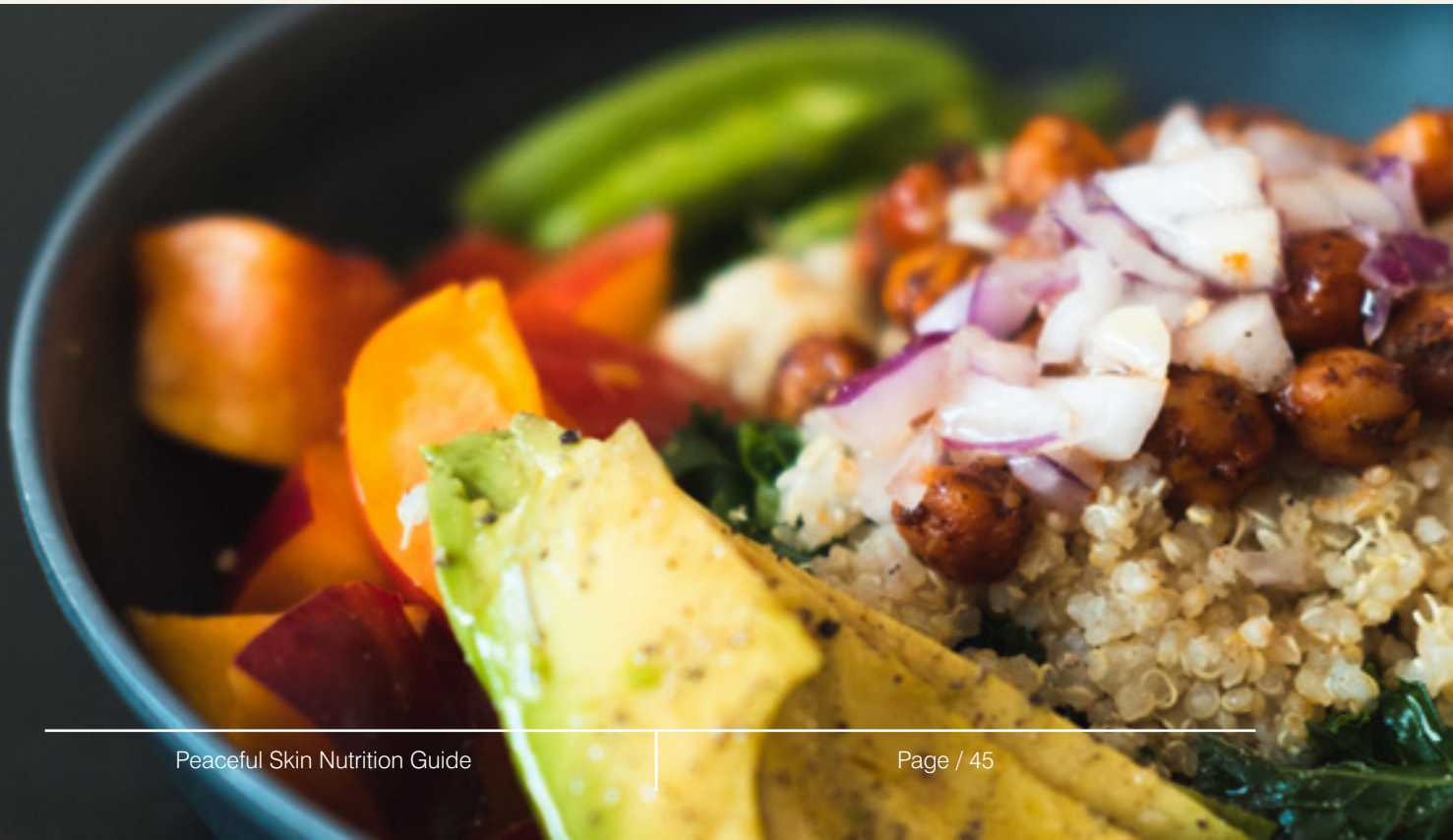
- A. Free range eggs + avocado + sea salt + turmeric
- B. Gluten free toast + almond butter + raw honey
- C. Chia seed pudding + shredded coconut + hemp hearts + cacao nibs
- D. Organic coffee blended with cacao butter + MCT oil + xylitol

II. Lunch

- A. Yogurt (grass-fed dairy or coconut) + collagen powder + berries
- B. Salad with quinoa + olives + jicama + homemade greek salad dressing
- C. Sandwich with gluten free bread + free range turkey + avocado + tomato
- D. Smoothie with frozen berries + protein powder + hemp hearts + bee pollen

III. Dinner

- A. Chili with beans + onions + spices + grass-fed beef or bison
- B. Pesto pasta with lentil noodles + basil + cashews + cherry tomatoes
- C. Casserole with squash + tomato sauce + herbs + mushrooms
- D. Grass-fed ground beef + sweet potatoes + asparagus
- E. Wild-caught salmon + white rice + grass-fed ghee + broccoli



IV. Snacks

- A. Sliced apples + nut butter (avoid peanuts due to mold toxicity)
- B. Hard boiled egg + paprika
- C. Homemade popcorn + coconut oil + pink himalayan salt
- D. Mashed avocado + hot sauce + free-range turkey slices

V. Drinks

- A. Sparkling water + apple cider vinegar + lime
- B. Bone broth from grass-fed or pasture-raised livestock
- C. Tea + lemon + raw honey
- D. Mocktail with amino acids (GABA, L-theanine, etc.)



Peaceful Skin Nutrition One-Page Guide

CARBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White rice • Sweet potatoes • Quinoa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit (all forms) • Cauliflower • Cassava 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potatoes • Beans / Lentils • Raw honey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squash • Mushrooms • Root vegetables
FATS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avocado • Grass-fed butter / ghee • Coconut / Coconut oil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beef / Lamb (grass-fed) • Olives • Salmon (wild caught) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sardines (wild caught) • Hemp hearts • Chia / Pumpkin seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eggs • Nuts • Dark chocolate (low sugar)
PROTEIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collagen (grass-fed) • Hemp hearts • Lentils / Beans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salmon (wild caught) • Sardines (wild caught) • Peas / Pea protein 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beef / Lamb (grass-fed) • Seeds • Eggs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bone broth (grass-fed) • Spirulina • Nuts

INFLAMMATORY FOODS TO REDUCE OR AVOID

Seed Oils

Swap with: coconut oil, avocado oil, grass-fed butter

Gluten

Swap with: gluten-free flours, white rice, yams, cassava

Sugar

Swap with: monk fruit, stevia, xylitol, raw honey

Trans Fats

Swap with: less fried food, safer fats

Alcohol

Swap with: CBD, calming herbs, alcohol-free tonics

Processed Meat

Swap with: grass-fed meat, eggs, wild caught fish, lentils

Processed Dairy

Swap with: grass-fed dairy, plant-based milks (without seed oils)

KEY NUTRIENTS TO EXPERIMENT WITH

- Vitamin D3 + K2
- Zinc
- MSM
- Vitamin E
- Biotin
- Vitamin C
- Probiotics
- Hyaluronic Acid

LIFESTYLE LEVERS TO REDUCE INFLAMMATION

Sleep	Hydration	Movement	Stress + Self Care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing light exposure • Make your room darker and colder • Meditate before bed • Limit caffeine past noon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to drink close to a gallon each day • Add lemon, electrolytes, or ACV to your water • Create reminders to hydrate through the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find forms of exercise you love • Exercise with a friend or family member • Remind yourself of the benefits of movement (outside of your appearance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take breaks to breathe deeply throughout your day • Spend less time around people who stress you out • Find the forms of self care you enjoy most