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**Your Skin and Healthy Aging.** Our skin is the largest and fasting growing organ in our body. It is imperative that we focus on taking care of our skin just like we focus on our overall health. As we age, our skin becomes drier and we lose elasticity in our skin, which may cause sagging and fine lines to appear. The most helpful tips to keep in mind when preventing skin damage are:

* Limit direct sun exposure for longer periods of time and use at least a SPF30 sunscreen.
* Wash and moisturize your skin regularly.
* Sleep for 7-8 hours daily to boost a clear complexion.
* Stop tobacco use and limit alcohol consumption.
* Drink plenty of water to keep hydrated.
* Eat a healthy diet with a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans.

“A healthy diet shows with healthy skin”, says Elaine Montemayor-Gonzalez, Extension Program Specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Montemayor- Gonzalez continues, “What we put in our bodies greatly affects the aging of our skin, so foods with antioxidants and essential fatty acids are the most important foods to consider for keeping your skin healthy”. Antioxidants help prevent free radical damage, which can lead to skin problems such as sagging, wrinkled, or blemished skin. Some of the best antioxidant rich foods are berries, beets, spinach, kale, and 70% cocoa dark chocolate.

Other antioxidant rich foods that are also beneficial for healthy skin are loaded with fatty acids and vitamins A, C, and E.

These essential nutrients all work together to help support, protect, and produce new skin cells for your body.

* **Omega 3 Fatty Acids** are healthy fats that naturally help moisturize your skin, keep skin flexible and protect from sun damage. Try foods such as salmon, walnuts, and flaxseeds.
* **Vitamin A** can be sourced from food we eat through beta carotene. Vitamin A helps with new cell production, growth, and helps prevent wrinkled skin. Excellent sources to include in your diet are sweet potatoes, broccoli, carrots, and mango.
* **Vitamin C** is an antioxidant that protects your skin from oxidative damage caused by the sun, which can lead to visual signs of aging. It also helps support collagen formation to keep skin strong and firm. Vitamin C is added to many topical serums and creams due to its superpower to help reduce the appearance of brown spots, red marks, and skin irritations. Top foods high in vitamin C include chili peppers, yellow bell peppers, tomato, lemons, oranges, and strawberries.
* **Vitamin E** is an essential nutrient with anti-inflammatory properties that aids in supporting cell function and skin health. Vitamin E is beneficial at reducing UV damage to skin and with the help of nutritious foods, can be absorbed better when combined with vitamin C. Vitamin E is also available for topical use in anti-aging creams, eye serum, sunscreens, and makeup. Sunflower seeds, avocado, salmon, trout, nuts, and olive oils are some of the foods with vitamin E.

Keep your skin and body healthy by adding a variety of foods to get the best all-around nutrition. Your skin will age with time but preventing skin damage is key to a longer radiant glow.

Try new recipes that incorporate more antioxidants and fatty acids, visit dinnertonight.org to help you plan your meals.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact me, (903) 473-4580 or email Sarah.Latham@ag.tamu.edu. You may also read more about this and many more topics on my blog, <http://agentsarah.blogspot.com/>. Follow Rains County AgriLife on Facebook for additional information and upcoming events.