

3 Things in Your Fitness Regime that are Hurting Your Skin

Your exercise and diet habits might just be ageing your skin.

21 July 2016 by Davelle Lee



Retired French tennis player Marion Bartoli recently made the news after losing close to 20kg since her competition days and shocked many by how much her skin appears to have aged as a result of her weight loss. Did you know that some of the things we do when we try to lose weight can affect our skin? Here's what you need to look out for:

1. Tensing up

When you undergo vigorous fitness training, you increase the physical strain on all your muscles – including the ones on your face.

Li Si Yang, a personal trainer at fitness training studio Journey to Fitness based in Hawaii, says your body works extra hard to perform intensive exercises and this naturally causes your face to tense up. Over time, this shows up as fine lines and wrinkles around the eyes, lips and forehead.

Avoid clenching and overstraining your muscles by learning relaxation techniques, says Li Si. Deep breathing exercises and meditation can help you to wind down. Make sure too, to sleep a sufficient number of hours each night to give the body time to repair itself after a tiring workout.

2. Not eating enough protein

You're trying to lose weight, so in addition to working out, you're also eating less. Most diets usually require you to eat much less protein – so little that your body doesn't have the right amount to make enough collagen to support the skin's underlying structure. Protein provides a source of amino acids from which the body can synthesise collagen to make your skin firmer.

In addition, when you lose weight, the surface area of your skin is larger than what the newly diminished fat layer is able to hold up – skin becomes loose and sags. All these folds and wrinkles are made worse when your body isn't getting sufficient protein to regenerate elastic skin.

So avoid a dramatic dip in weight and your skin will stay plump. Nutritionist Chan Joy Seng at Alive Nutrition Consultancy says you should aim to lose weight at a healthy rate of 0.5 to 1kg per week. The best way to achieve this is to cut down on carbohydrates rather than protein. Start by eliminating sugary beverages from your diet. "Everybody needs to consume food, but you definitely don't need a sweet drink to go with it," says Joy Seng. Drink plenty of water, as it is essential for restoring your skin's elasticity.

Maintain a balanced diet that incorporates a lot of natural, unprocessed food, Joy Seng advises. Go for whole grains, lean meat or fish, and fruits and vegetables that are loaded with vitamins and minerals.

3. Sun damage

A late morning jog in the park might be great for your waistline but it is detrimental to your skin.

Ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun can damage skin cells and deplete collagen in the skin, leading to wrinkles and other skin problems such as dark spots. Worse still, UV rays can cause irreparable DNA damage and skin cancer.

UV radiation is strongest from 11am to 3pm, so if you must exercise outdoors, do it before or after this window. If possible, avoid any outdoor exercise that requires prolonged sun exposure, says Li Si. Join a spin class or design a home workout instead.