

Do You Look Older Than You Should

(BlackDoctor.org) -- Who wants to look older than they actually are? I don't know about you, but I always get super happy when I am carded at a bar. Wrinkles may be the road map of life, but no one wants to read an atlas when they look in the mirror. Keep in mind, you may be writing a few of those lines yourself. Certain habits and behaviors increase the risk of premature skin aging. Avoiding them can help keep your skin looking younger, longer.

Leading Cause of Wrinkles: Sun Exposure

A "healthy" tan is anything but. Tanning is a sign of skin damage, evidence that the sun's ultraviolet rays have penetrated and damaged the skin's support structure. Most wrinkles are caused by sun exposure throughout life -- and it's never too late to halt the process.

- What you can do: Wear sunscreen with sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. The hands and face are particularly vulnerable to sun damage, due to their frequent exposure. Make sunscreen application part of your out-the-door routine.

Another Top Cause of Wrinkles: Smoking

Beyond question, smoking is bad for your skin. Smoking accelerates the aging process; wrinkling skin and making you look old beyond your years.

Early wrinkling is visible under a microscope in smokers as young as 20. The more years and packs smoked, the more likely wrinkles will occur. Wrinkles are also more likely to be deeper in smokers. Tobacco smoke gives skin an unhealthy color and coarse texture, as well.

- What you can do: Stop smoking!

How Facial Muscle Contractions Cause Wrinkles

Wrinkles at the corners of the eyes (crow's feet) or between the eyebrows (frown lines) are thoughts to be caused by small muscle contractions. Over a lifetime, habitual facial expressions like frowning, smiling, or squinting leave their mark on our skin.

- What you can do: Wear sunglasses or corrective lenses to avoid squinting from the sun or nearsightedness. If the furrowed-brow glare is a regular part of your facial repertoire, trade it in for a more Zen-monk-like gaze.

How Sleeping Positions May Cause Wrinkles



The way you sleep may actually cause wrinkles. No matter how soft your pillow is, it puts pressure on your face each night. Over years, this can etch lines into your chin, cheeks, or forehead. Your personal pattern of sleep lines depends on how you tend to rest your face on the pillow.

- What you can do: Sleep on your back. People who don't sleep with their face on a pillow do not tend to develop sleep lines.

A Surprising Cause of Wrinkles: Yo-yo Dieting

Some experts believe that years of repeated yo-yo dieting -- losing and gaining back large amounts of weight -- can damage the skin. Repeated stretching of the skin may damage the elastic structure that gives skin its youthful, firm tone.

- What you can do: If you've decided to lose weight, do it at a reasonable pace. Most experts recommend losing a pound a week. Avoid binge eating, which leads to rapid weight gain that could stretch the skin.

Preventing Wrinkles Through Diet and Nutrition

Your skin is your body's largest organ. Like your heart and brain, your skin needs good nutrition to maintain form and function. In particular, skin needs the B vitamin, Biotin. This forms the basis of new, healthy skin cells. Other vitamins are important for skin, as well.

Vitamin C and E are antioxidants. They can protect skin from sun damage, and reduce skin damage caused by free radicals. These naturally occurring by-products of metabolism contribute to aging skin.

Vitamin A helps to maintain and repair skin tissue.

- What you can do: eat a balanced, healthy diet full of fresh fruits and vegetables. Five to seven servings a day are best. Tomatoes have Biotin and vitamin C, carrots provide Biotin and vitamin A, and green leafy vegetables and almonds are loaded with vitamin E.

And Don't Forget Water

As we age, skin becomes thinner and drier. It becomes more important than ever to drink plenty of water, to keep skin hydrated and full.

- What you can do: drink six to eight glasses of water a day -- the amount recommended by most experts. Talk to your doctor first if you have heart failure or are on dialysis for kidney disease.

By De'Laney Rowland

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