

InnerGlow Skin Care

Markham Village Naturopathic Clinic

258 Main Street North, Markham, Ontario, L3P 1Y7 (905) 201-6497

The Importance of Essential Fatty Acids in Healthy Skin

If you think healthy skin and oil don't mix, think again! The right oils—specifically oils high in essential fatty acids (EFAs)—can leave your complexion glowing.

Essential fatty acids are fats that we cannot make – we must take them in from the diet – hence the name “essential”. EFAs are important structural components of cell membranes throughout the body and increase production of collagen in skin cells. They help cells stay fluid and flexible, allowing nutrients to enter the cells and wastes to exit. Because it is the cell membrane that also holds water in, the stronger that barrier is, the better your cells can hold moisture -- and that means plumper, younger looking skin.

There are 2 major classes of essential fatty acids – omega-6 and omega-3. Over the last century, humans have seen a major relative decline in the amount of omega-3 present in the diet, while omega-6 content has risen up dramatically. Our ideal omega-6 to omega-3 ratio for good health is 1:1, a significant difference from our current average ratio of about 15:1. This notable over-consumption of omega-6-rich oils such as corn, safflower, sunflower and soybean oils has been proven to have the potential to promote inflammation and oxidative stress.

Omega-3 fatty acids, on the other hand, have been shown to be anti-inflammatory in the body. They have also been shown to lower oxidative stress, and to be beneficial in a wide variety of skin imbalances as well as other medical conditions. Omega-3 fatty acids are found in fish, seafood, flaxseeds, walnuts, canola oil, free-range meats and to

a limited degree in dark green leafy vegetables. The best absorbed source is from good quality fish oils.

Since it is difficult to eat enough fish every day, it is important to take EFA's in a supplement form to make sure you always have adequate amounts in your system. They should ideally be taken in a two-to-one ratio of EPA:DHA with a combined total of 1800-3000mg/day.

These fatty acids are an important part of your cell membranes: They improve fluidity and structure and, allow them to communicate better with other cells, and help them find nutrients and dispose of waste. For your skin, this means improved overall health and a better moisture barrier.

