



tasteforlife[®]

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Women's Health AWARDS

Inside

FOOD TRUCK
RECIPES!

STRESS: THE
MIND-GUT
CONNECTION

HOW MUCH
COLLAGEN DO
YOU NEED?

CONNECT WITH COLLAGEN

IT'S GOT SOMETHING TO OFFER JOINTS, BONES, MUSCLES, AND SKIN

YOU MIGHT NOT THINK ABOUT YOUR CONNECTIVE TISSUE OFTEN, BUT THIS UNSUNG HERO IS THE ESSENTIAL NETWORK THAT CREATES STRUCTURE FOR THE HUMAN BODY. WHEN IT COMES TO HOLDING YOUR CONNECTIVE TISSUES TOGETHER, YOU CAN THANK COLLAGEN; THIS PROTEIN IS THE MAIN INGREDIENT NEEDED TO BUILD THE CONNECTIVE TISSUE THAT SERVES AS THE BODY'S FRAMEWORK. ALTHOUGH YOUR BODY MAKES COLLAGEN, IT'S ALSO FOUND IN THE DIET (AS WELL AS IN DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS).

"Just as you would not want to go tightrope walking without your safety net, think of collagen as your body's safety net," says Shaffer R.S. Mok, MD, a gastroenterologist in Ohio. Keeping enough collagen available means your body has the building blocks it needs to create a healthy safety net.

"Our bodies naturally produce collagen, and this protein keeps our skin plump and prevents sagging. However, starting in our 20s, we slowly begin to lose collagen," says Alexis Parcels, MD, board-certified plastic surgeon at Parcels Plastic Surgery in New Jersey. This gradual loss of collagen can be replenished with collagen in dietary supplements.

For the very reason that collagen is found all over the body, its potential health benefits are also wide-ranging. Collagen supplements get the lion's share of attention for smoothing skin wrinkles and giving a more youthful appearance to skin. In this role, taking collagen supplements and applying topical creams for several months has been shown to improve skin elasticity, says Dr. Parcels, but collagen also increases bone density and improves joint pain.

"In my area of expertise—the gut—collagen helps rebuild the protective barrier between your intestinal lining, where bacteria live, and your circulation," explains Dr. Mok. "Lack of integrity of this barrier leads to a leaky gut, in which compounds within the gut can leak into your circulation, leading to low levels of inflammation. Meanwhile, collagen supplementation can help heal the gut, particularly in people with inflammatory bowel disease like ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease."

For gut healing, Dr. Mok recommends starting with 15–20 grams per day of supplemental collagen. Most collagen supplements are sourced from animals,

including pigs, cows, and fish. You can find collagen supplements in powder, capsule, and liquid form. It may also be applied as a skin cream. All of these are generally safe for most people. However, mild side effects have been reported, including nausea, upset stomach, and diarrhea, says Dr. Parcels.

If you are looking for ways to round out your collagen-protecting plan for your body, Dr. Parcels says consuming foods high in antioxidants and avoiding ultraviolet rays from the sun can also prevent collagen breakdown and thus preserve your body's natural collagen supply. ■■■

SELECTED SOURCES Personal Communication: Shaffer Mok; Alexis Parcels





Dialing in the Right Dose

How much should you supplement with collagen? The answer to this question depends on your health goals. Alexis Parcels, MD, shares her general recommendations (although you should follow the label directions of the particular supplement chosen):

Goal / Dosage

✓ **Skin wrinkles?** 2.5 grams of hydrolyzed collagen type I and a mixture of types I and II have demonstrated benefits after 8 to 12 weeks.

✓ **Joint pain?** 40 milligrams of raw type-II collagen taken daily for 6 months or 2 grams of hydrolyzed type-II collagen for 10 weeks may help reduce joint pain.

✓ **Bone health?** Research is limited, but 5 grams of a hydrolyzed collagen sourced from cows helped increase bone density after one year in a single study.

✓ **Muscle building?** 15 grams taken within an hour after resistance training may help build muscle, though other protein sources are likely to have similar effects.

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