The main cause of sagging skin and what to do about it

Sagging skin is a typical sign of aging. Many people aren't very concerned about it, but for some of us sagging skin can be more pronounced or we are just more bothered by it. What can you do if you want to reduce sagging skin and get back to a skin that feels a bit more like you again? In this article we will list some of the options and we'll take a closer look at collagen stimulating injections.

No matter the ethnicity or exactly the environment we live in, sagging skin is a universal and natural development as we grow older.[1] Sagging skin can lead to wrinkles and folds, which are also natural.

Still, for those of us who want to get back some firmness to our skin – but what can we do that works?

The main cause of sagging skin

Collagen is the most abundant protein in the body and provides structure and strength, not least to our skin.[2] As we grow older there is a gradual decrease of this protein in the skin, which can lead to thinner, weaker,[3,4] and sagging skin.[1,5]

Factors that can aggravate sagging skin

There are some well-known factors that are bad for our skin and can make things even worse:

Smoking can aggravate sagging skin since it can decrease the formation of new collagen in the skin.[6] This is a good reason to stop smoking, apart from all the health benefits you'll get as well.

Sunshine is good for our wellbeing so make sure to spend time outdoors. However, lots of sun exposure can lead to a decrease of collagen in the skin[2] so take care and avoid sunburn.

A diet that is high in sugars has also been shown to create certain compounds (so called Advanced Glycation End products, AGE) that can prevent collagen formation.[7] So, in addition to being beneficial for our overall health, reducing the intake of candy and sodas is good for our skin as well.

Food supplements to combat sagging skin

The body can build its own collagen. Despite that, food supplements that contain collagen have become very trendy and are marketed as a treatment for skin, hair, nails, and joints.

There are several studies that show that these types of food supplements can increase the collagen content in the skin and have some effect on wrinkles.[2]

Food that may help sagging skin

If you want to prevent sagging skin orally, you could always start by taking a closer look at your diet, instead of starting off with supplements. There are lots of collagen in our food, for example in meat and fish and especially in organ foods and broth (broth made from bones, cartilage, and skin).ˈ Collagen in food supplements is often made from bovine or fish.[2]

Vitamin C is important for collagen formation and stability in the skin[8], which is why food supplements with collagen often contain vitamin C. You can of course also increase vitamin C intake via food that contains it, such as vegetables, root vegetables, fruit, and berries.

Skincare products with vitamin A

Preventing or treating sagging skin with dietary changes or food supplements is a do-it-at-home thing that you can try without consulting an expert. Another thing that you can try that doesn’t require help from specialists is to use

skincare products to combat sagging skin.

For example, skincare products that contain vitamin A (also called retinol) and its derivatives retinaldehyde and tretinoin have been shown to induce formation of collagen and to have a positive effect on skin aging.[9]

Aesthetic treatments to combat sagging skin

If you want to improve sagging skin in a specific area – and want a more visible change – aesthetic treatments can be used to combat age-related changes to your skin.

All aesthetic treatments are invasive so you should always consult a qualified healthcare practitioner if you are considering any of these types of treatments. Here are some examples:

Chemical peels, lasers, IPL, radiofrequency

There are several aesthetic treatments on the market that are based on causing a controlled trauma to the skin. The trauma will kick off repair mechanisms and regeneration of the skin and that in turn will increase collagen production. One example of these types of treatments is chemical peels.[9] Other examples are laser treatments, IPL, and radiofrequency.[9] Microneedling is yet another example that has become more common in recent years.[10]

There is of course a risk of side effects with these types of treatments, such as hyperpigmentation and scarring.[9] Consult a qualified healthcare practitioner for more information.

Collagen stimulating injections

The treatments mentioned above are fairly well-known when it comes to skin rejuvenation. Injections are maybe not as well-known but are an innovative way of increasing collagen production in the skin. These injections use a different “mode of action” compared to other skin rejuvenation treatments.

Here we'll take a look at the first and only US FDA-approved[11] and ISO certified[12] PLLA-based injectable, Sculptra®.

Sculptra contains a unique biocompatible and biodegradable substance called poly-L-lactic acid, PLLA-SCA.[13] Microspheres of PLLA-SCA are injected deep into the skin to stimulate the skin's own collagen production.[13,14]

This is a premium treatment that has been shown to increase collagen type 1 by up to 66.5% in three months.[15] Results appear gradually and are long-lasting, with improvement in the appearance of wrinkles for up to 25 months after treatment.[16,17]

No aesthetic treatment is risk-free so make sure to consult a qualified healthcare practitioner for more information if you are considering a treatment with Sculptra to reduce sagging skin.

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