

When it comes to the effects of what you eat on your health, you can't see what's happening to your cells and organs, but you can look at your face.

**1 bunch lacinato (Tuscan) kale, washed, stemmed, and chopped or thinly sliced**  
**1 tablespoon olive oil or avocado oil**  
**1/2 teaspoon sea salt**  
**2 cups shredded carrots**  
**1/2 small red onion, peeled and thinly sliced**  
**1 small or 1/2 large avocado**  
**2 tablespoons lemon or lime juice**  
**1/4 cup pumpkin seeds**

**1. How AGEs can age you**

Our modern diet is littered with processed, fried and sugary foods that contribute to accelerated aging from glycation, the linking of sugars (glucose and fructose) to amino acids (the building blocks of protein) to form advanced glycation end products, or AGEs. Sun damage, excessive alcohol intake and cigarette smoke can increase free radicals and oxidative stress, while eating foods rich in antioxidants can help prevent oxidative stress by neutralizing free radicals. Many antioxidants and phytonutrients may help protect against UV rays, especially vitamins A, C, D and E and the carotenoids, which include beta-carotene, lycopene and lutein. Other skin-protecting nutrients include selenium (Brazil nuts), zinc (sesame and pumpkin seeds), green tea polyphenols, proanthocyanidins and resveratrol (grapes), silymarin (artichokes), genistein (soy), and curcumin (turmeric).

**Inflammation and oxidation**

These two factors not only wreak havoc on your health, but they damage collagen and elastin, the proteins that give skin and connective tissues (like tendons and ligaments) elasticity and strength.

**Kale, Carrot and Avocado Salad with Pumpkin Seeds**

**Serves 4–6**

Kale is rich in lutein, carrots are rich in beta-carotene, avocado is rich in vitamin E and healthy fats, and pumpkin seeds are rich in zinc.

**Reduce incoming AGEs** by eating a diet that focuses on fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and using moist cooking methods such as poaching, steaming, stewing and boiling. While the manufacturers of antioxidant supplements would love to sell you on the promise of better skin, the truth is that the evidence for taking isolated nutrients in supplement form is inconclusive, and going overboard on antioxidants can actually contribute to oxidation. Healthy skin reflects overall health, and poor nutrition can contribute to factors that accelerate skin aging as well as age-related diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

**Cooking and marinating with herbs and spices**, including cinnamon, cloves, oregano, allspice, ginger and garlic, can also inhibit AGE formation. In excess, free radicals lead to oxidative stress, which contributes to premature skin aging by destroying collagen and elastin. One of the best strategies against premature skin aging is eating lots of vegetables and fruits because this increases the level of carotenoids and other antioxidants in the skin.

**Tomatoes, watermelons, pink grapefruit, papayas and guavas.**

**2**