

## 7 Anti-Aging Nutrients You Need More Of No Matter How Old You Are

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Whether it's a glint of gray hair in the mirror or the crow's-feet nesting around your eyes, the realization that you're *aging* can be jarring. Many people start spending big money on hair salon visits and wrinkle creams, but if you're looking for something that can really make a difference, consider the anti-aging nutrients we get from food and supplements, says Judith Hellman, MD, a dermatologist in New York City.

"Certain nutrients are proven to increase telomere length—the little caps on the end of DNA strands that correlate to aging," says Hellman. Here's how it works: As we get older, the protective telomeres shorten and DNA stops regenerating as well as it once did. That process leads to cell breakdown, which is essentially aging. Another process that shortens telomeres is oxidative stress, in which unstable molecules cause damage to cell structures such as telomeres. As we age, the body loses its ability to neutralize these unstable molecules. (Make YOUR well-being a priority this year! Join *Prevention* and other leading minds in health & wellness for our annual R3 Summit.)

Your telomere length serves as a marker for your lifespan: The shorter telomeres get, the less time you have left. Ugh—ready for the good news? Hellman says these nutrients and antioxidants help counteract these aging processes and may even lengthen your telomeres:

### 1. Vitamins A, C, and D

You know that oxidative stress thing Hellman mentioned above? Well, these vitamins function as *antioxidants*, and they can help relieve that stress. They promote the healthy function of skin and other organs. "Vitamin A scavenges for unstable oxygen molecules and neutralizes them," says Hellman. It also boosts immunity, which is especially important as we age. Food sources include beef, poultry, eggs, and brightly colored produce such as apricots, oranges, carrots, and tomatoes; try to get at least two servings a day of these foods to keep up your A levels.

Vitamin C (plentiful in citrus fruits) is necessary for the development and maintenance of collagen (what gives skin its youthful padding). Vitamin D has been shown to prevent skin aging and may help keep those telomeres long. One study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that telomeres were significantly longer in patients with the highest vitamin D levels, compared with those with the lowest levels. You can get D in fortified cereals and dairy products, though you may want to talk to your doctor about taking D supplements, as well. (Do you have a vitamin D deficiency? Learn the signs.)

### 2. Omega-3 Fatty Acids

This wonder fat is proven to promote health as we age in a number of ways, from reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease and inflammation to promoting skin health and pain-free joints. Researchers at Ohio State University also found omega-3s help preserve telomere length in overweight but otherwise healthy middle-aged and older people. "Eating fish twice a week or getting the equivalent in fish oil supplements has been well-documented in delivering cardiovascular benefits," says Marci Clow, a registered dietitian nutritionist in Santa Cruz, CA. (Just avoid these 12 fish.) Don't love fish? You can also find omega-3s in flaxseeds, nuts (particularly walnuts), vegetable oils, and enriched eggs.

### 3. Polyphenols



Just like vitamins A, C, and D, polyphenols are powerful antioxidants. "They are found in high quantities in green and white tea," says Hellman, as well as grapes, grape seeds, and cacao beans.

#### 4. Turmeric



You've probably heard that this spice—common in Indian food—has anticancer properties. In one recent study by researchers at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, curcumin (the substance that gives turmeric its peppery flavor and mustardy smell) appeared to block the growth of melanoma and other cancers. Curcumin also tamps down inflammation in the body, says Clow. "Inflammation is a common factor in many chronic conditions, and it is exacerbated by the aging process," she says. Sprinkle the spice into marinades, salad dressings—or make curry.

## 5. Magnesium



This mineral plays a key role in more than 300 vital body processes, says Lorraine Maita, MD, a physician in Summit, NJ, and author of *Vibrance for Life: How to Live Younger and Healthier*. "It relaxes muscles and calms the nervous system, which helps us sleep," she says. "It's also necessary for heartbeat rhythm, blood pressure regulation, protein synthesis, bone formation, and blood sugar control." Essentially, it helps keep many of our body functions running smoothly as we get older—and it may also protect telomeres, says Hellman. "Magnesium may influence telomere length by helping promote DNA integrity and repair, as well as reducing oxidative stress and inflammation," she says. You need 400 mg daily; nearly two-thirds of Americans fail to get there. Try adding more dark leafy greens, nuts, seeds, beans, fish, and whole grains to your diet.

## 6. Resveratrol

Wine lovers rejoiced when research emerged about the anti-aging benefits of resveratrol—an antioxidant found in red wine. In addition to helping to improve insulin sensitivity and protect against heart disease by relaxing blood vessels, research has also linked resveratrol to longevity. "Resveratrol promotes healthy regeneration and repair of the body's cells, ultimately preserving telomere length," says Maita.

## 7. CoQ10

This enzyme plays a crucial role in generating energy for our cells. The body uses co-enzyme Q10 (CoQ10) to make a molecule called adenosine triphosphate (ATP), which fuels the energy-producing center of cells—the mitochondria. As we age, we make less CoQ10, and the unhappy result is that our cells don't function like the whippersnappers they once were, says Tsippora Shainhouse, MD, a dermatologist in Los Angeles and a clinical instructor at the University of Southern California. There's no set target for how much CoQ10 you need, but you can get more from your diet by eating beef, sardines, mackerel, and organ meats like liver. Vegetarians can get small amounts from spinach, broccoli, and cauliflower.