

8 Potential Health Benefits of Collagen — and 1 Thing It Can't Do



From skin and bones to gut health and more, here's how the trendy supplement may boost your health and well-being. Who would have thought that a substance found in bones and skin could become the need-to-have supplement? We're talking collagen.

Collagen is a type of protein that plays an important role in building and supporting many tissues, from bones and cartilage to skin, hair, eyes, and the digestive system.

When you take a collagen supplement or eat foods rich in collagen, you are consuming collagen that comes from an animal. Collagen peptides are often sold in powdered or capsule form, and collagen can also be consumed in bone broth. If you're going to invest in taking collagen supplements, it's important to know the bevy of possible benefits collagen supplements can provide.

1. Supplements Help Replace What's Naturally Lost Through Aging

Collagen is the “glue” that holds your body together. It makes up about one-third of the protein in your body, research shows. Thing is, your body produces less collagen starting in your thirties and forties. Collagen peptides added to your diet may serve to replace what your body begins to lack as you age, and support your overall health.

Also it is known that antioxidants can help skin by protecting against oxidative damage — one of the main root causes behind skin issues including premature aging and hyperpigmentation. Oxidative damage happens naturally with aging, but also occurs from exposure to air pollution and other toxin exposures in the environment, and excess sun exposure. Collagen peptides and antioxidants seem to show the greatest promise for this problem.

2. Collagen Is an Easy-to-Digest Source of Protein

Your body works hard to digest protein from sources like chicken or beef, and some people may find that they deal with digestive symptoms like burping or stomach pain after a meal. But collagen supplements are hydrolyzed, meaning the collagen is broken down, a process that makes it easier for your body to digest. Collagen supplements may potentially be a more comfortable way to get protein into your diet. The process of hydrolyzing also allows collagen peptides to dissolve in water, which makes it relatively simple to use them in everyday foods (like water or smoothies).

3. Collagen Helps Smooth Wrinkles and Boost Elasticity in Skin

Skin health is the most well-researched benefit of taking collagen. In a January 2019 review in the *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology*, researchers analyzed 11 randomized, placebo-controlled studies of more than 800 patients who took up to 10 grams (g) per day of collagen with the goal of improving skin health. The results? The supplements were shown to improve skin elasticity, help it better hold onto moisture, and rev the density of collagen fibers within skin. Ten grams per day is a small scoop — and it could be a small step in preserving a youthful appearance.

4. Collagen May Help Lessen Joint Aches and Pains

Joint pain can make it difficult to exercise, which can knock you off the path toward your goals. Taking a collagen supplement may help you get back on track. There is some evidence that collagen can be great for supporting connective tissues and improving joint pain after exercise. For instance, one study

published in January 2017 in the journal *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism* found that athletes with knee pain who took 5 g of collagen peptides daily for 12 weeks had less joint pain during exercise compared with a placebo group. Oral collagen may support cartilage repair and may also have an anti-inflammatory effect.

5. Oral Supplements May Promote Gut Health

In inflammatory digestive conditions, such as irritable bowel disease (IBD), there is a “gut healing” theory about collagen. Some research finds that collagen levels are decreased in patients with these conditions. By taking collagen, you would help correct a deficiency.

Research published in May 2017 in the journal *Alimentary Pharmacology and Therapeutics* found that among IBD patients, there was an imbalance between the formation and breakdown of collagen fibers, and this was connected to inflammation. Past research also shows that IBD patients have decreased serum levels of type 4 collagen. Collagen is a part of connective tissue, which makes up your colon and GI tract, so by bringing your levels up, there may be a supportive environment for your body to heal. This is an emerging idea, but it may be one benefit to trying a supplement or dietary approach to increase collagen intake.

6. Collagen May Help With Your Heart Health

Stirring collagen into your coffee may be good for your ticker, too. A small uncontrolled open label study published in the *Journal of Atherosclerosis and Thrombosis* in May 2017 looked at 32 participants who took a collagen tripeptide twice a day. After six months, markers of atherosclerosis (buildup in artery walls), including measures of cholesterol and arterial stiffness, had improved. When atherosclerosis affects the arteries that lead to your heart, it's known as coronary artery disease, which is the deadliest form of heart disease. Researchers think that the collagen may help fortify blood vessel walls to reduce the risk of artery disease.

7. Peptides Can Keep Bones Healthy

Bone mineral density decreases as you age, especially after menopause, according to the National Osteoporosis Foundation. In a randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind trial on 102 post-menopausal women, participants who took collagen peptides for one year increased their bone mineral density compared with the control group. Researchers postulated that this was because the collagen stimulated bone formation while slowing down bone loss, per an article in the journal *Nutrients* in January 2018.

8. Collagen May Be Useful in Joint Disease

There are different types of collagen, according to an article published in November 2019 in *Molecules*. Type 1 (found in beef) is beneficial when it comes to your skin, while type 2 (found in chicken) is potentially more helpful when it comes to arthritic joint pain. Joints are composed of cartilage, which is largely made up of collagen. A study published in June 2016 in the *Eurasian Journal of Medicine* found that patients with knee osteoarthritis who took acetaminophen along with type 2 collagen reduced joint pain during walking and had quality of life superior to those on the medication alone. That said, research is mixed and hasn't come to a firm conclusion. Your best bet is to purchase a supplement that contains various sources of animal collagen for the widest range of benefits.

9. Collagen Won't Help You Lose Weight

Eating enough protein is important to a healthy diet. The nutrient is needed to support your body in building muscle — lean tissue that is more metabolically active than fat (meaning it leads to faster metabolism). But you'll want to put collagen in perspective here: It can't be the only change you make to your diet and lifestyle habits. Adding a collagen powder to a diet high in sugar and refined carbohydrates and excess calories won't help you lose weight.

In general, supplements that claim to supercharge your metabolism are tempting, but there's little evidence that they work. In a review published in May 2012 in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, researchers at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston followed thousands of

dieters and found that liquid diets, fad diets, and over-the-counter diet pills were not linked to weight loss. So what worked? Eating less fat and exercising more.

<https://www.everydayhealth.com/skin-beauty/potential-health-benefits-of-collagen-and-thing-it-cant-do/>

<https://www.everydayhealth.com/weight-pictures/hard-truths-about-weight-loss.aspx>

<https://www.everydayhealth.com/skin-beauty/skin-hair-supplements-they-work/>

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#collagen, #oral collagen, #collagen for joints, #collagen benefits.