



BEAUTY

Is the future of beauty pill shaped? Stylist investigates nutricosmetics – products you swallow, not apply



STYLIST BY THE STYLIST WEB TEAM



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Nutricosmetics – beauty products you ingest rather than apply – promise everything from firmer skin to thicker hair. But do they actually work?

Words: Claire Coleman

Imagine a holiday without sun cream – no white streaks or sticky skin acting like a magnet to the sand. Instead, your protection has already been delivered neatly and efficiently by a daily pill, leaving you to relax, unfettered by worries about whether you've missed a bit on your back.

That's the future, according to trend forecasters, who predict that global sales of ingestible beauty – stuff you swallow, rather than apply – will reach £5billion by 2020, more than double the £2.3billion we spent in 2013. Dubbed 'nutricosmetics', these powders, drinks and pills are set to radically change our beauty routines. While the sun protection pill and a tablet that will apparently stop hair going grey are still in development, shelves are already heaving with ingestible products that promise to smooth skin, strengthen nails and give you hair worthy of its own shampoo advert.

In many ways, this isn't surprising. The link between what we eat and how we look is a given and, from contraceptives to isotretinoin (for acne sufferers), we know pills can have a huge impact on our skin – often proving more effective than something we apply topically. "If you think about how few drugs are delivered in patch format, and how many are by pill or injection, that gives you an idea of how difficult it is to get something through the skin," says Dr Gary Moss of the School of Pharmacy at Keele University.

Of course, some of the biggest names in skincare have been saying this for years. In 1995, Dr Howard Murad expanded his skincare range to include supplements, believing that "topical skincare products address only 20% of your skin. The other 80% is affected by what you eat and drink, including your dietary supplements." So why the excitement now? According to Global Industry Analysts' 2015 report, the trend is being driven by a number of factors, including the "rapidly ageing population", "the rising significance of the beauty-from-within concept" and "growing concerns over side effects posed by topical cosmetics".

Nutritionist Gabriela Peacock, whose range of supplements are stocked in Selfridges, also believes that in an increasingly time-poor society, we're looking for fast and easy options to enhance our lives. "In an ideal world, we'd get all of our nutrients from our diet, but most of us don't live ideal lifestyles. Stress, alcohol and pollution all deplete our bodies of vitamins and minerals that our hair and skin rely on to function. That's where supplements come in."

The problem is that it's not a simple equation. "Just because we know that, for example, inflammation is associated with ageing, and that coenzyme Q10 (an antioxidant found in the body) can reduce inflammation, doesn't mean that taking lots of coenzyme Q10 will make you look younger," says Lucy Jones, dietitian and spokesperson for the British Dietetic Association.

It's this uncertainty that led Sara Palmer Hussey to create Lumity (£79/month, lumitylife.co.uk), supplements that promise to significantly improve the tone and texture of your skin and the way you feel. "Ageing is a multi-faceted process, but the body has systems in place to deal with all aspects of it," she says. "So rather than, for example, giving the body antioxidants, it's about giving the body the nutrients it needs to support its own antioxidant-generating process." In other words, your body already has the tools to deal with the problems we face as we age, and the solution is not to give it more tools, but to help it use its existing tools more efficiently.



Which nutricosmetics are right for you?

But how do the new beauty supplements differ from everyday multivitamins? Well, these may contain vitamin D and B vitamins, which are essential for healthy hair, skin and nails, but a supplement that specifically targets hair, skin and nails is likely to contain higher doses of these vitamins to ensure they take effect. The new generation of supplements go a step further still, with ingredients such as collagen and hyaluronic acid designed to make your body, skin and hair behave optimally, and look good in the process.

According to Jones, though, more does not always mean better. "The European Food Safety Authority suggests upper limits for vitamins and minerals and you should abide by those." Excesses of water-soluble vitamins, such as vitamin C, will simply pass through the