

the beauty bar

Essential Fatty Acids

You already know they're important for good health, but what do essential fatty acids have to do with radiant skin? These polyunsaturated fats (which include omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids) are essential for staving off inflammation, dryness, and acne, says Valori Treloar, a dermatologist and coauthor of *The Clear Skin Diet* (Cumberland House Publishing, 2007). "Fatty acids act as building blocks for the molecules that direct and regulate inflammation," says Treloar. "Plus, dry skin makes wrinkles appear more pronounced—so getting too few fatty acids can also make you look older."

Your body can't naturally produce omega-3s or omega-6s, but fortunately, they are easy to find in foods. Since most Americans get far more omega-6s than omega-3s (corn products and packaged foods are packed with omega-6s), dietitians and dermatologists alike will tell you to focus on eating foods rich in omega-3s, such as nuts and oily cold-water fish. Treloar says her patients' winter dryness often improves when they start taking flaxseed oil (1 tablespoon daily) or fish oil supplements, two great sources of omega-3s.

USE TOPICALLY: You can get an omega boost from your face cream, and when it comes to the topical application of essential fatty acids, omega-6s work in just the same way as omega-3s—your skin doesn't know the difference and utilizes them totally differently than in their dietary form. That's good news, especially since omega-3 moisturizers smell slightly fishy and spoil much quicker than the sister 6s.

WE LIKE: Sophyto's Mega Omega Moisturizer (\$45, 1.35 oz; www.SophytoOrganics.com), which is rich in jojoba oil;

Bio Etic's Organic Inca Inch' Night Cream (\$28, 1.7 oz; natureenvy.com), which is packed with sesame oil; and Rejuvenating Cream by Flor•Essence (\$26, 1.7 oz; florahealth.com), which is an omega-rich cocktail of kelp, shea butter, and burdock. —JOSIE GARTHWAITE