

Beauty ▶ Beauty Products

Why You Should Think Twice About Collagen Supplements

Audrey Noble · Oct 6, 2018

Collagen supplements are having a major moment thanks to promises of restoring the protein we’ve lost back into our skin, hair, and bones. But do they actually work? Or are they just another Insta-famous beauty product trap that we’ve fallen for?



“Collagen is a family of fibrous proteins that act as the building blocks for skin, bones, teeth, cartilage, tendons and other connective tissues,” says Jessica Weiser, a dermatologist at New York Dermatology Group. Our bodies produce collagen naturally, but it’s not always so plentiful. “Starting in your late 20s and early 30s, production begins to decline resulting in loss of volume, in wrinkles and sagging,” says Shereene Idriss, an NYC-based dermatologist at Union Laser Dermatology. (Photo via Oppenheim Bernhard/ Getty)

The answer may be in supplements (at least if your feed has anything to say on the matter), but it isn’t as simple as popping a pill or drinking a smoothie. Ahead we help you come to a conclusion.

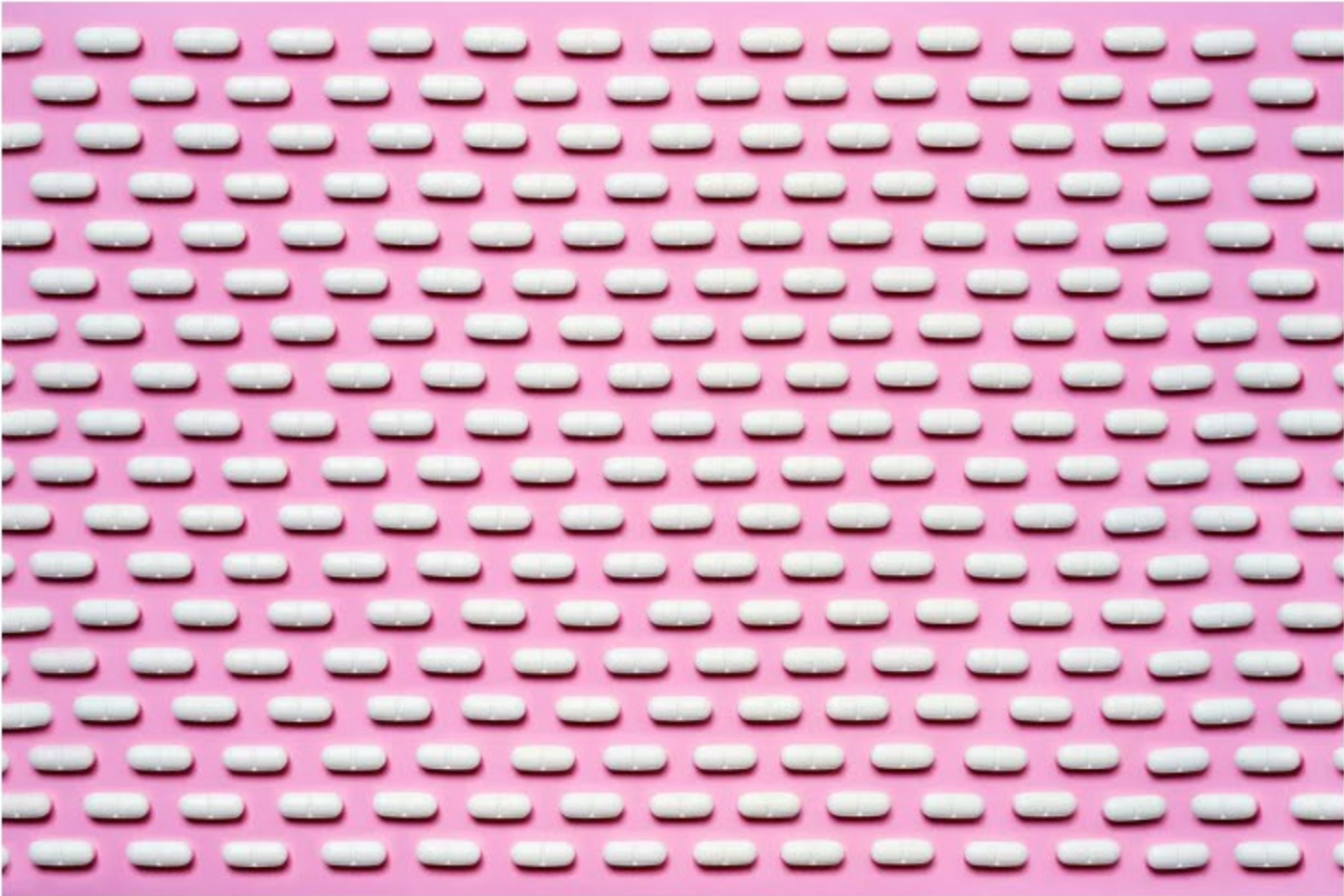
WHY SUPPLEMENTS ARE BENEFICIAL



Collagen pills and powders are made of fragmented pieces of amino acids and peptides, which, once ingested and in our bloodstreams, connect with collagen-making enzymes to help skin keeps its elasticity and firmness, says NYC-based dermatologist Dendy Engelman . They may also potentially improve skin hydration, joint health, and muscle mass, according to NYC cosmetic dermatologist and founder of SmarterSkin Dermatology Sejal Shah. A 2014 study detected increased collagen production in 65 percent of the 114 women who orally took collagen peptides. (Photo via Shana Novak/ Getty)

Engelman recommends hydrolyzed collagen (often made of animal hides, fish bones, and scales), like the Reserveage Collagen Replenish powder (\$20), as it is the simplest form of collagen to ingest because it’s broken down into the smallest forms of peptides and amino acids. Plus, the odorless and tasteless powder makes it easy to be mixed into any beverage. “This product has verisol collagen that is only one of two types of collagen that shows scientific results in two weeks,” she says. Other popular options include Vital Proteins Collagen Peptides (\$43), which is naturally sourced from bovine hides, and Neocell Collagen Beauty Builder (\$18), which is made of amino acids and hyaluronic acid to strengthen the skin’s elasticity and give the skin volume.

WHY YOU SHOULDN’T RUSH INTO COLLAGEN SUPPLEMENTS



Collagen pills are not regulated by the FDA, which makes some dermatologists wary of their safety. “It is of utmost importance that consumers educate themselves about the source from which the collagen is derived,” says Idriss. “Make sure that the collagen supplements (if you choose to take them) are from free range and antibiotic free protein sources.” In addition, choose a brand that discloses that it tests metal contamination, as heavy metal ingredients can lead to allergic reactions. (Photo via Lars Sohl / EyeEm/ Getty)

“The FDA legally doesn’t require supplements to undergo extensive testing and trials; it only requires that these products be labeled as supplements,” says Weiser. “Efficacy is best proven through scientific studies, specifically double-blinded randomized control trials where the supplement is compared head to head with a placebo.” She believes that because this type of rigorous testing isn’t economically worthwhile for the companies, all consumers have is data based on anecdotal stories.

If you’re curious to try them, do your due diligence and research what they’re actually made of — giving preferential treatment to those with fewer ingredients and the addition of a third-party testing certification from NSF, UL, or USP to supplement the fact that it’s not FDA-approved. In the meantime, protect your body’s collagen by wearing sunscreen each and every day to avoid oxidative stress, followed by retinol at night to promote a healthy, plump complexion.

What do you think? Do you think collagen pills actually work? Tell us at @Brit+Co!

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