

Collagen - what it is and why you want more of it

By [Dr Lilliana Gilla Lulli](#), issued by [Skin Renewal](#)

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When we're young, our skin has a youthful-looking firmness. As we get older, however, this gives way to general laxity, a loss of volume, sagging and wrinkles. While there are many factors contributing to the ageing process, a lot of it has to do with collagen.



Collagen explained

Collagen is the most abundant protein that occurs naturally in our bodies. It can be thought of like the glue of the body and is known to provide structure to the skin, ligaments, tendons and the body as a whole. Importantly, it provides elasticity and firmness to the skin. Collagen is ample when we're younger, which explains why the skins of kids, teens and those in their early 20s bounce back from expressions such as frowning or laughter.

As we age, however, frown and laughter lines appear, which can turn into deeper wrinkles over time. This is because the collagen's elasticity starts to wear out, and also because less and lower-quality collagen is produced. The natural supply begins to dwindle in our mid-20s, which is why the aim should be to preserve the existing collagen and to stimulate the production thereof as much as possible.

Prevention, prevention, prevention

People always want to know what the magic bullet of aesthetic treatments is, and even though there is never only one thing, prevention ranks pretty highly in my view. Not only do preventative measures yield better results, in the long run, but it is also more cost-effective.

A person who made the choice to invest in collagen-stimulating treatments from a young age will maintain a fresh and glowing complexion as they age. In comparison to someone who neglected to pay any attention to the ageing process may find their skin to be in poor condition, saggy, lined and wrinkly. An intensive treatment plan will allow some of the damage to be repaired, however, it will be costly, and the results will probably never quite be the same as someone who maintained

their skin from an early age.

Having said that, as with any investment, it is never too late to start.

Increasing collagen at home

Any worthwhile anti-ageing skincare routine puts a focus on preserving and boosting the collagen supply. One of the easiest ways to do this is to invest in a high protection factor sunscreen, preferably one that contains antioxidants. Unprotected sun exposure is the biggest culprit when it comes to degrading the integrity of your collagen stash.

Another way to protect the skin's elasticity is to choose skincare products that contain proven collagen-encouraging ingredients. These include vitamin C, glycolic acid and certain peptides but the gold standard is still trusty retinol, a form of vitamin A. While it stimulates skin-plumping collagen, it can also minimise pigmentation and is a great antioxidant.

For the record, topical products containing collagen won't be able to help you bump up your reserves as the molecule is too large to penetrate the deeper layers of the skin. When you spot it on the ingredients list, know that it's merely there to act as a hydrator.

Turbo-boosting collagen treatments

At Skin Renewal, many in-office treatments are focused on stimulating the production of collagen. This is achieved by reaching the deeper layers of the skin through treatments such as medical-grade lasers, peels, skin needling and, most importantly, a combination thereof.

These treatments work on the principle that the skin has the ability to repair itself. The treatments cause controlled disruption on the skin, forcing the blood to flow to the area, which causes existing collagen to tighten and contract, and further stimulate the production of new collagen.

This means you'll get to enjoy an instantly firmer look that will improve over time as your fresh, new collagen starts to grow. It is important to remember though that the stimulation and production of collagen is cumulative, meaning that even though you will see results after just one treatment, the overall result will continue to improve with regular treatments spaced one month apart.

The good news is that the collagen-boosting effect of these treatments will combat the ageing process significantly, and will also address issues such as acne, acne scarring and pigmentation. For that reason, it is essential to consult with a skincare professional to not only recommend the correct products to use at home but also to ensure that the correct treatment package is prescribed to treat your skin and its needs specifically.

To find out more about Skin Renewal and how we can help you increase your skin's collagen content, visit www.skinrenewal.co.za. It's one of the many ways we can help you enjoy firmer, more youthful-looking skin for longer.

Dr Lilliana Gilla Lulli obtained a BSC in Human Physiology and Psychology from the University of Johannesburg, and an MBChB from the University of Pretoria. She has a passion for anti-ageing from the inside out and enjoys sharing knowledge and innovations with her patients. She is currently consulting from Skin Renewal's Bedfordview, Morningside, Fourways and Illovo branches.

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