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Pick Your Poison: How Various Alcoholic Drinks Wreak Havoc On Healthy Skin

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We all like to indulge in a beer, cocktail, or glass of wine at both our finest and worst hour. The health benefits of some alcoholic drinks encourage us to raise our glass and drink to our health, but what exactly do these beverages do for our skin? The happy hour cocktail we drink, before precariously setting down to dance to James Brown’s “I Feel Good,” could also fastly age us and lead to tragic death like Amy Winehouse, if abused.

Not all alcohol is created equal when it comes to its effect on skin in both men and women. Dr. Susan F. Lin, a practicing physician in women’s health, anti-aging, and aesthetic medicine for over 21 years in San Mateo, Calif., and founder and creator of MD Factor Skin and Hair Care, believes women metabolize alcohol slightly different than men. “German scientists believe that

alcohol alters the metabolic breakdown of estrogen, shifting the natural balance to more harmful metabolites. This can be [linked] to [an] increase [in] breast cancer,” Lin told Medical Daily in an email. However, it all comes down to moderation because consuming too much alcohol will not only make you feel bad, it can take a toll on your physical appearance, too.

Before you hit up the bar, crank open a beer, or pour yourself a glass of fine wine at home, learn which alcohols have the least damaging effects on your skin.

Clear Shots vs. Dark Shots

The color or lack thereof isn't the only thing that separates these two liquors. Clear shots, like vodka, gin, and tequila and dark shots like rum, whiskey, and tequila are the best options when it comes to avoiding sugar, salt, and other harmful ingredients. Although, “both clear vodka and dark [shots] contain alcohol, which will cause dehydration, making our wrinkles more apparent,” Lin says, clear shots are the lesser of two evils.

Unlike dark liquors, clear liquors do not contain congeners and extra fermentation. Most spirits contain congeners, also known as impurities, which are produced during the fermentation process and are mainly responsible for the taste and smell of alcoholic beverages. Acetaldehyde, one of the various compounds that make up congeners, is considered to be 30 times more poisonous than alcohol and is one of the main causes for hangovers, Medical Daily reported.

The more congeners you consume, the worse your skin will look the next day. Dark liquors contain the most impurities, since they are an integral part of the flavor of these liquors. Currently, clear liquors such as popular vodkas Smirnoff, Absolute, and Grey Goose have eight, 16, and 14 impurities, respectively. When in doubt, it's best to steer clear of dark liquors.

Mojitos vs. Margaritas

Consuming these two drinks can mentally transport you to your own private paradise. However, their sugar and salt content can leave you with more than you bargained for. Dr. Adebola Dele-Michael, a dermatologist at Radiant Skin Dermatology and Laser in New York City, N.Y. told Medical Daily in an email, “A lot of mixed drinks contain sugar. Sugar can lead to accelerated skin aging, wrinkles, and acne.”

Not everything about the mojito is bad health news. According to Lin, “Mojito actually has some vitamins from the mint, so [it's] more beneficial than pure vodka.” She believes what we eat and do while drinking is what plays a pivotal role in how our skin looks — high carb consumption or staying up all night, for instance.

Margaritas are not only comprised of many mixes, they also contain high amounts of sugar and salt — a double whammy. Rather than choosing salt or sugar on the rim, opt for neither and have it on the rocks to reduce calories, salt, and sugar. The American Heart Association says excess levels of sodium cause increased water retention and may lead to puffiness, bloating, and weight gain.

Beer vs. Wine

Wine seems to be the alcoholic beverage of choice when it comes our health, but as Medical Daily previously reported, beer can be just as healthy. Similar to wine, beer contains antioxidants and important B vitamins, like niacin and folic acid. “Beer does have nutritional value,” Lin said, I think [it's] better than drinking other high-calorie drinks such as soda and mixed drinks with high sugar content.”

However, not everything about beer is good news. Drinking beer can dehydrate the skin and the body as a whole, according to Dele-Michael. Moreover, since alcohol is a vasodilator it can exacerbate symptoms for people with sensitive skin.

Wine can be helpful to the skin, granted if you don't suffer from a skin condition like rosacea. Red wine contains tannin — found in the skin, stems, and seeds of wine grapes — which can irritate sensitive skin in addition to the alcohol content. Its anti-aging compound, resveratrol, is beneficial for those with no skin conditions.

White wine is considered to be the ideal wine of choice for rosacea sufferers. Although “white wine does not cause as much flushing as red wine,” Dele-Michael said, “it does not have the health benefits that red wine has been proven to have.” In this case, choose the best wine for your skin type.

So What Is The Best Drink For Your Skin?

Alcohol can affect your nutrition and cause a depletion in healthy nutrients that carry oxygen in your body. It can negatively affect your vitamin A level, which is important in the production of collagen, and lead to a loss of elasticity in your skin. Excess drinking will only speed up the aging process of your skin. The U.S. Government Dietary Guidelines consider a moderate level of drinking as up to one drink a day for women and up to two drinks a day for men.

There may not be a best drink for your skin because the key to drinking is all about moderation.