[IMAGE]

Seven Foods for a Flawless Complexion

Revitalize Your Skin Without Chemicals or Plastic Surgery

By Dr. Ping Zhang

Aging is a fact of life. While many people try harsh chemical peels, exfoliants and costly plastic surgeries to reclaim their youth, walk no farther than your kitchen to achieve a radiant complexion naturally using ancient Chinese food therapy.

Let's Face It: Aging is a Fact of Life.

While you can always try harsh chemical peels and a host of costly - and risky - plastic surgeries to revitalize your skin, look no further than your local market to find effective, natural ways to achieve a flawless complexion.

Just as Chinese herbs promote health, beauty, healing and rejuvenation for our face and body, Chinese texts laud the healing and beautifying effects of many foods. Food therapy can be a powerful tool for smoothing wrinkles and diminishing those dark eye circles, bags and facial discolorations.

Food therapy for facial complexion adheres to the basic tenet of Chinese medical philosophy, which holds that external beauty is a mirror reflecting internal health. These foods help address the internal imbalances that result in a spotted or discolored complexion. Of course, their beneficial effect is gradual, and for best results, any food therapy program should go hand in hand with other natural complexion treatments - such as herbs, acupuncture, and acupressure.

Here are some of the best foods the Chinese associate with a spotless and radiant complexion:

Coix Seed - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **COIX SEED**
Chinese Name: *Yi Yi Ren*

This wonderful barley-like grain, when eaten as food, can help the body clear up discoloration of the facial complexion. It is also a very effective strengthener of the digestive system.

To find and prepare coix seed: Cook it in soup as you would with other beans and barley, or boil it into tea (15 g) and drink it all day.

MULBERRY FRUIT

Chinese Name: *Sang Shen Zi*

Mulberry Fruit - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark These fruits of the mulberry tree contain beneficial antioxidants, help overcome weakness, and brighten a withered-looking complexion. They also are beneficial for clearing dark spots from the face.

To find and prepare mulberry fruit: Mulberry fruit is available in food markets and can be eaten as you would any berry. You also can buy fresh mulberry juice and drink it, or use it in your cooking.

WHITE TURNIP

White Turnip - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **Chinese Name:** *Bai Luo Be*

This is a fairly common turnip, often called *daikon*, which offers plenty of medicinal benefits. It detoxifies the skin and has a beneficial effect on the complexion when eaten regularly.

To find and prepare white turnip: It can be found in most regular food markets. Clean and cut it into small pieces, and then cook it with your regular soup. You also can shred and prepare it as a salad. For facial discoloration, juice white turnip every morning and drink about half a cup.

LUFFA

Chinese Name: *Si Gua*

Luffa - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark This common Chinese vegetable rejuvenates the skin and is used by the Chinese for facial discoloration and wrinkle conditions. It also is commonly processed for use as a bath sponge, to exfoliate and polish the skin.

To find and prepare luffa: You easily can grow these zucchini-like vegetables yourself if you have the space. You also should be able to find them at Chinese markets. Prepare them as you would any squash. It also makes an excellent topical mask for dealing with wrinkles, dark spots and uneven facial discoloration. The best way to collect the juice is to cut the vein and let the liquid drip into a jar, and then apply it topically to the face while fresh.

Food therapy, as effective as the other traditional Chinese medicine techniques in a facial rejuvenation program, is a powerful tool for smoothing wrinkles and diminishing those dark eye circles, bags and facial discolorations.

Persimmon - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **PERSIMMON**

Chinese Name: *Shi Zi*

Persimmon has been known for centuries to cool the body, nourish the lungs and moisten the skin - all actions that improve facial complexion.

To find and prepare persimmon: You may find two different kinds of persimmons. The Chinese version is sometimes called *kaki*. Both the Chinese and the American persimmons are great for complexion. Eat them raw as fruit, but make sure they're very ripe. Dried persimmons are a special treat that can be found in Chinese markets. Another way to use persimmon to brighten the complexion is by applying the fresh peel to the face.

GINKGO NUT

Chinese Name: *Bai Gou*

Ginkgo Nuts - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark The health benefits of ginkgo leaf extract have been widely recognized in the West. Much modern research indicates that the antioxidant plant chemicals in ginkgo benefit blood flow and might even slow memory loss. Not many are aware that in Chinese medicine, the nut of the ginkgo tree is more often used medicinally. Ginkgo nut is used herbally, but the whole nuts themselves, often roasted, are a traditional Chinese food that nourishes lung energy and calms wheezing. The best way to use ginkgo to clear the complexion is topical application.

To find and prepare ginkgo nut: It is available in Chinese markets. Crush the fresh nuts into a paste and apply directly to the face.

WINTER MELON

Chinese Name: *Dong Gua*

Winter Melon - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark This gourd vegetable and its seeds are very popular in China, especially as a soup. It benefits the heart, detoxifies the body and beautifies the skin. Whether eaten as a food or taken in herb form, winter melon can improve a variety of complexion problems.

To find and prepare winter melon: You can find it in Asian markets or even in Western-style organic food stores. It's also called wax gourd or white gourd. Eat it as you would any melon, peeling off the outer skin. Remove the seeds and pulp, cut it into small pieces, and put in soup or sauté with garlic. For topical skin beauty use, take a small piece, including the juice, and apply the liquid directly to your face as a skin brightener.

Ping Zhang, DOM, is the author of *A Comprehensive Handbook for Traditional Chinese Medicine Facial Rejuvenation and Anti-Aging Therapy*. She has been interviewed by numerous media outlets and publications, and currently hosts a Web radio program, "Traditional Chinese Medicine With Dr. Ping."
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