

# Ageing from an Ayurvedic perspective

The association between Ayurveda, anti-ageing and cosmeceuticals is gaining importance in the beauty, health and wellness sector. Ayurvedic cosmeceuticals date back to the Indus Valley Civilization. Modern research trends mainly revolve around principles of anti-ageing activity described in Ayurveda: Vayasthapana (age defying), Varnya (brighten skin-glow), Sandhaniya (cell regeneration), Vranaropana (healing), Tvachya (nurturing), Shothahara (anti-inflammatory), Tvachagnivardhani (strengthening skin metabolism), and Tvagrasayana (retarding ageing).

Ayurveda, the Indian traditional system of medicine, provides guidelines on the management of ageing. The most obvious signs of ageing skin are atrophy, laxity, wrinkling, sagging, dryness, a pigment or other blemishes, and sparse and/or grey hair.

Symptoms of chronological ageing include dry and thin skin, fine wrinkles, abnormal blood vessels, age spots, benign and malignant skin tumours, and due to the deterioration of the skins immune system.

Skin ageing is determined primarily by genetic and hormonal factors. Photo-ageing is a separate process, and largely involves damage to the collagen and elastin fibres in the skin.

## Ayurvedic Perspective

Ageing is known as 'Jar', defined as that which has become old by the act of wearing out, 'jryati iti jar'. It is synonymed as 'vrdhakya', meaning increasing age. Ayurveda divides human life into various stages:

- **childhood** (up to the age 16 years)
- **youth and middle age** (from 16 to 60 years (charaka) or 70 years (sushruta) exhibits progressively the signs of growth (vivardhamana, 16–20 years of age)
- **youth** (yauvana, 20–30 years)
- **maturity** (sampoornata, 30–40 years) weakening (parihani, 40 years onwards)

which gradually sets in up to 60 years.

- **old age**, wherein after 60–70 years the body elements, sense organs, strength begin to decline.

These are general descriptions, and are dependent on Prana (life energy that performs respiration, oxygenation and circulation). It governs two other subtle essences ojas and tejas. Ojas (the essence of the seven dhatus or bodily tissues) is responsible for the auto-immune system and mental intelligence; it is necessary for longevity.

Imbalanced ojas can create kapha-related disorders and decreased ojas – vata-related reactions.

Tejas (the essence of a subtle fire or energy) governs metabolism. Agni (central fire or energy source in the body) promotes digestion, absorption and assimilation of food. Tejas is necessary for the nourishing and transformation of each dhatu. Aggravated tejas burns away ojas reducing immunity and overstimulating pranic activity.

Aggravated prana produces degenerative disorders in the dhatus. Lack of tejas results in overproduction of unhealthy tissue and obstructs the flow of pranic energy. Just as it is essential to maintain balance amongst the tridosha – vata, pitta, kapha principles of motion, metabolism, structure, respectively, the dhatus and the three malas (bodily wastes); it is also important for longevity that prana, ojas and tejas remain in balance. The tridosha play a very important role in the maintenance of cellular health and longevity. Kapha maintains longevity on the cellular level. Pitta governs digestion and nutrition.

Vata, which is closely related to pranic life energy, governs all life functions. Proper diet, exercise and lifestyle can create a balance among these three subtle essences.

In Ayurveda, the outermost layer reflects the complexion and the quality of the Rasa Dhatu (nutrient fluid, the first

of the seven tissues of the body). It also acts as a mirror as it indicates whether the physiology as a whole is balanced or imbalanced, and whether there is inner health or disorder; it also reflects the aura of the individual. Mamsadhara, the innermost layer, is the platform for the skin's elasticity and firmness. When this layer is in balance, the skin looks young and supple.

A skin product that has vayasthapana (maintaining youthfulness) properties nourishes this layer to help slow the ageing process. Vata skin, which is dry, thin, fine-pored, delicate and cool to touch, tends to develop wrinkles earlier than the other skin types. Pitta skin, which is fair, soft, warm and medium thickness, is photosensitive and has least tolerance to sun, and is most likely to accumulate sun damage over time. Kapha skin which is thick, oily, soft and cool to touch, tends to develop wrinkles much later in life than Vata or Pitta type, but because of its thickness and oiliness, is more prone to accumulate ama (toxins) under the skin.

## Wrinkles

The skin loses its anti-oxidation ability with age – by exposure to the environment, the skin undergoes emaciation as a result of the formation of peroxylipids which can lead to the formation of wrinkles. Products which enhance anti-oxidation should help to improve the skin. Even brief exposure to UV radiation increases the activity of enzymes that break down the proteins, collagen and elastin that provide structural support for the skin. Prevention can be achieved by regular Ayurvedic herbal treatments and home care. [www.omveda.com](http://www.omveda.com)





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