

Nutrition and Ichthyosis

Overview

Nutrition plays an important role in maintaining healthy skin, supporting the immune system, and managing inflammation. While diet does not cause or cure ichthyosis, **good nutrition can help the skin function as effectively as possible** and support overall well-being.

This resource explains key nutrients that support skin health, tips for eating well, and considerations for infants, children, and adults with ichthyosis.

Why Nutrition Matters

People with ichthyosis often experience **increased skin turnover, water loss, and metabolic demand**, which can require extra calories and nutrients.

Maintaining balanced nutrition can:

- Support healthy skin cell renewal
 - Prevent infections
 - Promote wound healing
 - Maintain a healthy weight and energy level
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Key Nutrients for Skin Health

1. Healthy Fats

- **Why they help:** Essential fatty acids (omega-3 and omega-6) support the skin barrier and reduce dryness.
- **Sources:** Fatty fish (salmon, tuna, sardines), walnuts, flaxseeds, chia seeds, avocados, olive oil.

2. Protein

- **Why it matters:** Skin is made largely of protein; adequate intake helps repair and maintain skin tissue.
- **Sources:** Lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, tofu, nuts, dairy products.

3. Vitamins A, C, and E

- **Vitamin A:** Important for normal skin cell growth. (Found in carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach, fortified dairy.)
⚠ *Note:* People taking oral retinoids (like acitretin or isotretinoin) should avoid high-dose vitamin A supplements.
- **Vitamin C:** Supports collagen production and healing. (Citrus fruits, strawberries, bell peppers, broccoli.)
- **Vitamin E:** An antioxidant that helps protect skin from damage. (Nuts, seeds, vegetable oils, green leafy vegetables.)

4. Zinc

- **Role:** Helps with wound healing and immune function.
- **Sources:** Meat, shellfish, beans, nuts, seeds, whole grains.

5. Vitamin D

- **Importance:** Supports immune health and skin repair. Some people with ichthyosis may need supplementation, especially if they avoid sun exposure.
- **Sources:** Fortified dairy or plant milks, fatty fish, or supplements (as advised by your healthcare provider).

Hydration

- Ichthyosis can increase **transepidermal water loss**, so **staying hydrated is essential**.
- Aim to drink water throughout the day and increase intake during hot weather or physical activity.
- Moisturizing from the outside (emollients) and inside (fluids) work best together.

Nutrition in Infants and Children with Ichthyosis

- Some children with severe ichthyosis may have **trouble maintaining weight or growth** due to increased skin metabolism and heat loss.
- Pediatricians or dietitians may recommend:
 - **High-calorie, nutrient-dense foods**
 - **Frequent meals or snacks**
 - **Nutritional supplements or fortified drinks**
- Regular **growth and weight monitoring** is important.

Adults and Older Individuals

- Adults may experience **increased dryness** or **reduced appetite** with age.
- A balanced diet with adequate protein and healthy fats helps maintain skin integrity.
- If mobility is limited, discuss nutrition and physical activity options with your healthcare provider.

Supplements

- Most people can meet their needs through food.
 - Supplements should only be used when deficiencies are confirmed or recommended by a healthcare professional.
 - Be cautious with **high-dose vitamin A or D**, which can be harmful if overused.
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When to Seek Professional Guidance

- Unintentional **weight loss** or **poor appetite**
- **Slow wound healing** or frequent skin infections
- Concerns about growth in a child
- Planning to start **vitamin or herbal supplements**
- Difficulty managing dry or inflamed skin despite consistent care

A **registered dietitian** can create a personalized plan to meet your individual needs.

Helpful Resources

- **FIRST – Foundation for Ichthyosis & Related Skin Types**
www.firstskinfoundation.org
Email: info@firstskinfoundation.org
- **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics**
www.eatright.org – Find a registered dietitian

National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Dietary Supplements

ods.od.nih.gov – Evidence-based vitamin and mineral information

This Adult Toolkit Resource brought to you by:



This information is provided as a service to patients and parents of patients who have ichthyosis. It is not intended to supplement appropriate medical care, but instead to complement that care with guidance in practical issues facing patients and parents. Neither FIRST, its Board of Directors, Medical & Scientific Advisory Board, Board of Medical Editors, nor Foundation staff and officials endorse any treatments or products reported here. All issues pertaining to the care of patients with ichthyosis should be discussed with a dermatologist experienced in the treatment of their skin disorder.



Foundation for
Ichthyosis & Related
Skin Types

PO Box 1067, Lansdale, PA 19446-0687
Phone: 800-545-3286
Website: www.firstskinfoundation.org
Email: info@firstskinfoundation.org

Improve lives and seek cures for those affected by ichthyosis and related skin types.

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