

RUCHI GURNANI · NUTRITIONIST

Sugar and your skin



Why wrinkles, sagging and dull skin start at the plate. What sugar does to collagen, where the sugar hides in an Indian day, and the four-week plan to turn it around.

Swipe 👉

Read this first

Sugar in the blood sticks to the collagen in your skin. The stuck collagen goes **stiff and brittle**, and stiff collagen cannot bounce back. That is the sag and the lines. The process is called glycation, and it builds up quietly over years.

It is not the one gulab jamun at a wedding. It is the **chai with two spoons, the juice, the biscuits at 4 pm**, every day, pushing blood sugar up and down.

The good news: the spikes are the part you control. Change the order you eat in, swap the drinks, and the skin gets a chance to rebuild. New skin reaches the surface in about four weeks.

THE ONE RULE

No sugar you drink. Chai with sugar, juice, cold drinks, sweetened coffee. Liquid sugar spikes blood sugar fastest and the face shows it first.

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WHAT SUGAR DOES TO SKIN

- GLYCATION** When blood sugar runs high, sugar binds to collagen and elastin, the two proteins that keep skin firm and springy. The bound protein is stiff, brittle and yellowish.
- THE LOOK** Fine lines earlier than your age, skin that does not spring back when pinched, a dull or sallow tone, slower healing of pimples and cuts.
- IT ADDS UP** Glycated collagen is not repaired easily. Every year of high sugar leaves more of it behind. This is why a 35-year-old with high sugar can look older than a 45-year-old without.
- THE GOOD PART** Lower the spikes and the body builds new, clean collagen. You cannot undo the old damage fully, but you can stop adding to it from this week.

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WHERE THE SUGAR HIDES

CHAI AND COFFEE

Two spoons, four cups a day, is 8 spoons before you have eaten a sweet. This is the biggest sugar source in most Indian homes.

JUICE

A glass of fruit juice has the sugar of three or four fruits and none of the fibre. Packaged juice is worse. Eat the fruit, do not drink it.

BISCUITS AND RUSK

Maida and sugar. Four Marie biscuits with chai is a dessert. The 4 pm plate is where most people lose the day.

THE QUIET ONES

Ketchup, flavoured curd, breakfast cereal, health drink powders, bread, packaged chutneys. Read the label. Sugar comes as sucrose, glucose, corn syrup, maltodextrin.

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WHY LIQUID SUGAR IS THE WORST

NO BRAKES

Sugar in a drink has no fibre, no fat, no protein to slow it down. It hits the blood in minutes. A cold drink spikes faster than a mithai.

NO FULLNESS

Drinks do not fill you up, so the sugar comes on top of your meals, never instead of them.

THE SWAP

Chai without sugar for two weeks and the tongue adjusts. Nimbu pani without sugar. Chaas. Coconut water on its own, not daily. Plain coffee.

FRUIT

A whole fruit is fine. Its fibre slows the sugar. One or two a day, whole, chewed, ideally after a meal, not on an empty stomach.

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CHANGE THE ORDER, NOT THE PLATE

PROTEIN AND FIBRE FIRST

Start the meal with the dal, paneer, curd, egg or chicken, and the sabzi and salad. Eat the rice or roti last.

WHY IT WORKS

Protein and fibre eaten first slow how fast the carbs after them reach the blood. The same thali, eaten in this order, gives a lower spike.

THE WALK

Ten minutes of walking after a meal uses up blood sugar in the muscles before it can do damage. After dinner is the one that matters most.

VINEGAR AND NIMBU

A salad with nimbu or a spoon of vinegar before the meal takes the edge off the spike. Small effect, costs nothing.

THE RULE

Sabzi and dal first, rice and roti at the end, a ten-minute walk after. That is most of the fix.

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BUILD THE NEW COLLAGEN

VITAMIN C Your body cannot build collagen without vitamin C. Amla, guava, nimbu, orange, capsicum, every day. A fresh amla or a guava is enough. Cooking destroys some of it, so keep one raw.

PROTEIN Collagen is made from protein. A palm-sized portion at every meal: dal, paneer, curd, eggs, chicken, fish, sprouts.

ZINC AND COPPER Til, pumpkin seeds, chana, cashews. A spoon of seeds on the curd daily.

NOT A POWDER Collagen powder is broken down in the gut like any protein. Spend the money on paneer and amla.

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THE REST OF THE SKIN PLAN

SUNSCREEN The sun and sugar damage collagen in the same way. SPF 30 or above every morning, indoors too.

SLEEP Seven hours. Short sleep raises blood sugar the next day and makes you reach for sweets. The face shows both.

NO SMOKING Smoking stiffens collagen faster than anything else on this list.

WATER Two and a half litres. Chai and coffee count against it, not for it.

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TEST YOUR HbA1c

WHAT IT IS HbA1c is your three-month average blood sugar. One blood test, no fasting needed. It shows what the daily spikes have been doing, not just this morning.

THE NUMBERS Below 5.7 is normal. 5.7 to 6.4 is prediabetes. 6.5 and above is diabetes. Many people in their thirties are at 5.8 and have never been told.

WHO SHOULD Anyone over 30. Anyone with a parent with diabetes. Anyone with a belly, skin tags, dark patches on the neck, or lines earlier than their age.

THEN If it is 5.7 or above, this guide is not optional. The plate fixes it in most people when caught here. Retest in three months.

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ONE DAY OF EATING FOR YOUR SKIN

- WAKE UP** Water. Chai or coffee without sugar. Five soaked almonds.
- BREAKFAST** Two eggs or paneer bhurji with one roti, or a moong chilla with curd. A guava or an amla.
- LUNCH** Salad with nimbu first, then dal and sabzi, then rice or roti. A katori of curd. Walk ten minutes.
- 4 PM** Roasted chana, a fruit, or a handful of nuts. Chai without sugar. No biscuits.
- DINNER** Sabzi and dal or paneer first, then one or two rotis. Pumpkin seeds on top. Done three hours before bed. Walk ten minutes.

FOUR WEEKS

New skin reaches the surface in a month. Judge it then. Your HbA1c, judge it in three.

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Sugar is one part. Your plan is the rest.



I read your reports before I write a single meal. Then the plan: your routine, what you actually eat, your family's food. Three plans of ten days each, so it changes as you change.

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