

## Discover a Natural Way to Slow the Effects of Aging in Your Skin

*By Carl Thompson, Huffington Post*



Elderberry has been used as a natural healing ingredient for thousands of years, and its ability to combat colds and influenza is well documented. But scientists are finding that this berry has even more uses: it can also stave off the effects of aging on our skin by helping to improve microcirculation, the circulation of blood throughout the skin's network of tiny blood vessels.

The main ingredients doing the health-giving work in elderberry are anthocyanins, one of the richest sources of pigmentation in the plant world. Dark, densely colored elderberry has these powerful elements in abundance -- and they're natural anti-oxidants that have been shown to slow the aging process by reducing the level of oxygen free radicals in the body as well as by improving the flow of blood to the skin, as shown in a recent study.

The study investigated how anthocyanins could benefit obese women by decreasing oxidation and inflammation, and improving microcirculation. Among the female subjects who were given anthocyanins, there was a significant improvement in the microcirculation of blood to the skin. Moreover, that improvement was greatest among those who also embarked on an exercise program.

There's a clear link between microcirculation and aging: as we grow older, the flow of blood to the skin is reduced. By time we reach the age of seventy, the microcirculation to our skin is at a mere 40 percent of what it was when we were twenty. This diminished blood supply affects the underlying structure of the skin, one of the factors in the loss of elasticity and fullness, and the appearance of lines and wrinkles. The reduced blood supply also causes wounds to the skin to take longer to heal.

Other factors also reduce blood supply to the skin, including increased total blood cholesterol

and systolic blood pressure, and age-related hormonal changes. Lifestyle choices, such as diet and exercise, play a role as well: a recent study connected even moderate aerobic training to better microcirculation of the skin in sedentary obese subjects. Exercise also resulted in reduced blood pressure, and an improvement in the level of adiponectin in plasma, which increases the body's sensitivity to insulin.

Anthocyanins are commonly found in many fruits, but the European black elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) has been shown to be one of the most plentiful sources of these flavonoids as well as vitamins. However, after being absorbed into the human body, the anthocyanins found in elderberries are excreted from the body within four hours -- making a frequent dose of elderberry the optimal way to reap its health benefits. For purposes such as protecting against colds and flu, a dose of elderberry every four hours extracts is recommended.

As we turn to natural-based ingredients for their health benefits, the question often arises as to whether the fresh or commercially prepared version is ideal. In elderberry's case, the variations in the fruit's nutritional benefits -- due, in part, to different cultivars like the Haschberg variety, as well as to growing conditions -- point to a standardized commercial concentrate as the better choice. Created for maximum potency, with a high degree of consistency, these are readily available in a number of forms, including soluble powders and liquids. Now they're yet another efficient way to help improve our health -- proving that nature's best remedies can indeed be skin-deep.