



A FREE GUIDE

Omega Balance & Your Skin

The truth about omega-3, omega-6, and seed oils

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Read this before you fear a fat

If you've been told that seed oils are quietly wrecking your skin, and that omega-6 fats are the enemy, this guide is going to feel like a relief. The real story is calmer, more useful, and better supported by the science. You need both omega-3 and omega-6 fats. The goal was never to fear one. It's to get the balance right.

Here's the one-line version, so you have it up front: eat more omega-3, don't fear the omega-6 in whole foods, and go easy on cheap fried oils and processed food. Everything below is just the why, in plain language.

BOTH FATS ARE ESSENTIAL — YOU CAN'T MAKE THEM

Omega-3 and omega-6 are called essential fats because your body can't build them itself. Every bit you have came from food. Both do real jobs, and your skin uses both. So this isn't a good-fat-versus-bad-fat story. It's a balance story.

- **Omega-6 leans toward “go.”** In your body, omega-6 fats can be turned into signals that switch inflammation on. That sounds bad, but inflammation is also how you heal and defend, so you need some of this.
- **Omega-3 leans toward “calm.”** The omega-3s in fish, called EPA and DHA, get turned into signals that switch inflammation off and help it settle. They use the very same machinery omega-6 does, so the two compete, and the balance between them sets the tone.

Picture a seesaw. Too much omega-6 and almost no omega-3, which is exactly where the modern diet sits, and the “go” side stays stuck down. Add omega-3 and the seesaw evens out. That balance, tilted toward calm, is what your skin wants.

OMEGA-3 ALSO HELPS BUILD YOUR SKIN BARRIER

EPA and DHA do more than calm inflammation. They help make ceramides, the mortar that seals your skin barrier and keeps water in. So getting enough omega-3 supports the skin barrier from the inside, on top of easing the everyday inflammation that ages skin.

The real problem isn't omega-6

So if omega-6 is essential, where did the fear come from? Two real things got blurred together: the omega-6 in whole foods, which is fine, and what happens to cheap oils when they're heavily processed and then abused with heat, which is a different problem entirely.

LINOLEIC ACID IS A BUILDING BLOCK, NOT THE ENEMY

The main omega-6 in seed oils is called linoleic acid, and your skin barrier is built partly from it. It gets woven into a key ceramide that keeps moisture in and irritants out. In a large study of women, those eating more linoleic acid actually had less dry, thin, crepey skin, not more. And the blanket claim that seed oils drive body-wide inflammation doesn't hold up: when researchers reviewed the human evidence, raising linoleic acid did not raise markers of inflammation or oxidative stress.

SO WHAT ACTUALLY DESERVES CAUTION

- **The way the oil is made.** Refined seed oils are heavily industrialized: extracted with solvents, then refined and deodorized at high heat. That process strips out the oil's own vitamin E and antioxidants, can leave behind trace contaminants formed by the heat, and leaves the oil more prone to oxidizing when you then cook with it.
- **The company it keeps.** These oils usually reach you inside ultra-processed food, alongside refined sugar and additives, which is where excess omega-6 really floods in. Reused, overheated frying oil, think deep-fried takeout, is the worst case: it breaks down into the damaged, oxidized byproducts that actually drive inflammation in studies.

So the fat itself isn't the proven villain. The refining and the processed company it keeps are the real issue, which points to a simple move.

The simple move: whole foods and balance

MY PREFERENCE: EAT THE FAT IN ITS WHOLE-FOOD PACKAGE

- **Get your fats closer to whole.** Real nuts and seeds, avocado, and cold-pressed extra-virgin olive or avocado oil carry omega-6 wrapped in the antioxidants, especially vitamin E, that protect the fat from going rancid, the exact things industrial refining strips away. That intact food matrix is the best way to get these fats. A daily handful of nuts improves markers of oxidative stress; it doesn't worsen them.

SO WHAT ABOUT "THE RATIO"?

You'll hear that the ideal omega-6 to omega-3 ratio is low, and the modern diet's is far too high, often fifteen to twenty times more omega-6 than omega-3. That's true, and it's a useful picture. But you don't have to measure a ratio. Most nutrition experts focus on a simpler move: get enough omega-3, and the balance follows.

A STRAIGHT WORD ON THE EVIDENCE

The mechanism here is strong, but the skin results are more mixed, and you deserve the straight version. For conditions like psoriasis and eczema, fish-oil trials often show no clear benefit; for acne, a small trial did help. So treat omega-3 as a supporting player that makes your whole plan work better, not a cure on its own, and whenever you can, let food do the work over capsules.

None of this needs to be complicated. Get your fats from whole foods, lean toward omega-3, and keep the heavily refined oils and processed food to a minimum. The next page turns that into a simple plate.

Your plate: getting the balance right

Here's the whole plan, and it's refreshingly doable. Two moves: add omega-3, and ease off the abused, excess omega-6. You're adding a good fat far more than you're cutting anything.

ADD OMEGA-3 — THE MAIN MOVE

- **Eat oily fish two to three times a week.** Salmon, sardines, mackerel, and herring are the richest sources of the EPA and DHA your skin uses. Choose wild-caught when you can, and lean on smaller fish like sardines and mackerel, which carry far less mercury than big predator fish. Two servings a week covers the general target for most people.
- **For inflammatory skin conditions, consider a supplement.** If you're dealing with something like acne, eczema, or psoriasis, one to three grams a day of combined EPA and DHA is the range tied to lower inflammation. Because our oceans carry pollutants, pick a brand that's third-party tested for heavy metals and freshness; krill oil is one option that tends to run lower in contaminants. Take it with a meal in two divided doses, and check with your physician first.
- **Know the limits of plant omega-3.** Flax, chia, and walnuts give you a plant form called ALA, which is good food, but your body converts only a small part of it, often under ten percent, into the EPA and DHA that matter most. If you don't eat fish, algae oil gives you EPA and DHA directly.

EASE OFF THE EXCESS OMEGA-6

- **Cook with olive or avocado oil.** For everyday cooking, these give you gentler monounsaturated fats and a better balance than corn, soybean, or sunflower oil. You don't need to purge your pantry, just make the daily oil a good one.
- **Cut back on fried and ultra-processed food.** This is where excess, often oxidized, omega-6 really piles up in a modern diet. Cutting here does more for your balance than any label-reading.

COOK SMART

How you cook matters as much as what you cook. Steaming, poaching, and gentle low-heat cooking create far fewer damaged, skin-aging byproducts than deep-frying, charred grilling, or repeatedly reheated oil. Favor the gentler methods most days.

The bottom line

You don't need to fear a fat. You need to tip the balance. Add omega-3 from fish or algae, enjoy whole-food omega-6 from nuts, seeds, and avocado without guilt, and spend your caution on fried and heavily processed food instead. It's the same Mediterranean-style plate that supports the rest of your skin: calmer, better built, and aging on your terms.

WANT THE WHOLE MAP?

The Inside-Out Method

This guide is one piece of a much bigger picture. The Inside-Out Method is my complete course on building skin that stays resilient for decades — not skin that imitates 25. It's everything I teach my patients, in the order that actually works:

- 1 **Sleep, stress & circadian skin**
- 2 **The gut-skin axis**
- 3 **Nutrition for collagen** — just a glimpse of this section
- 4 **Movement & muscle**
- 5 **Hormones**
- 6 **GLP-1 medications & skin**
- 7 **The frontier**
- 8 **Topicals & procedures**

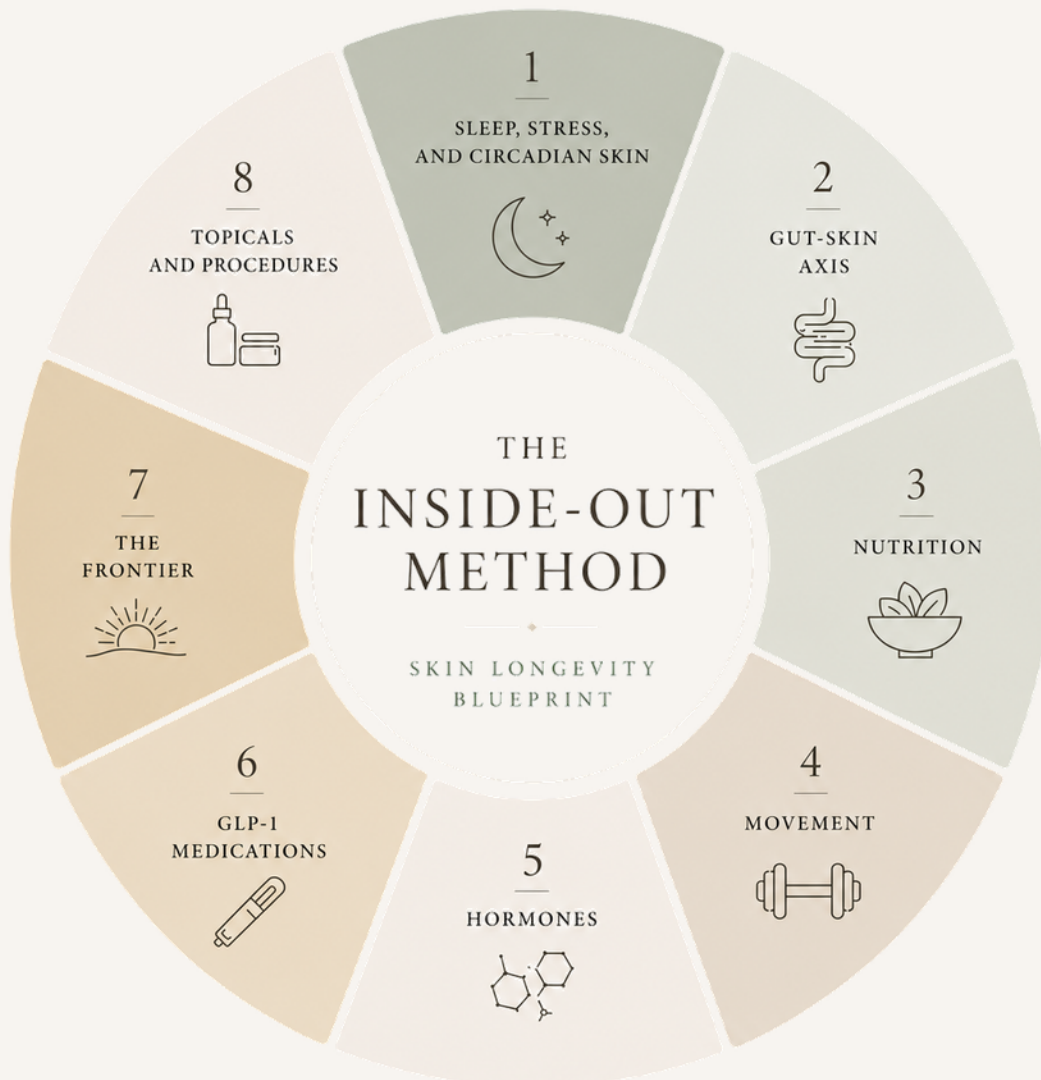
What you just read is a fraction of a single section. Each module breaks into short, digestible lessons you can do on your own schedule, with a workbook to make it stick and weekly live Q&A with me, over 8 to 10 weeks in a small cohort. It's the whole system, in the order that actually works.

Ready when you are

Join the next cohort at insideoutmethod.co

Dr. Jennifer Herrmann — double board-certified dermatologist with functional medicine training.

Educational content only. This guide doesn't replace personal medical advice. Talk to your own physician about any medication or treatment.



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