

A FREE GUIDE

Oral Health & Your Skin

Why your mouth shapes your face, and how to protect it

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Your mouth shapes your face

Most people file the mouth under “dental” and the face under “skin,” as if they were separate. They're not. Your mouth affects how your face ages in two big ways: your jaw is the frame your whole face is built on, and your gums are a hidden source of the body-wide inflammation that ages skin. Both are more in your control than you'd think.

YOUR JAW IS THE FRAME YOUR FACE SITS ON

A youthful face is really about structure. Your jawbone is the scaffolding your skin and fat are draped over, so a strong, dense jaw keeps the face defined. When that bone shrinks, the soft tissue has less to hold onto, and the face folds inward and reads as older. That's bone, not just skin, and bone responds to how you use it.

- **Chewing keeps that bone strong.** Your jawbone is living tissue. The force of chewing tough, textured food signals the bone cells to stay dense and even build, through the same muscle-to-bone crosstalk that keeps any bone strong. Live on soft, blended food and the jaw quietly gives ground.
- **Losing teeth or chewing speeds the loss.** Tooth loss, a soft diet, or a bite that no longer meets drops the load, and jaw bone density falls while breakdown rises. Strikingly, in animal studies normal chewing protected the jaw from bone loss even during estrogen loss, the same drop that thins bone in menopause.
- **So use your jaw, on purpose.** Keep your teeth, and replace lost ones so the bone stays loaded. And eat foods that actually take chewing, whole, fibrous, crunchy, instead of everything soft. It costs nothing, and it's structural support for your face.

Calm the fire in your gums

The second link is inflammation. Gum disease isn't only a dental problem. It's one of the cleanest examples of inflammaging, the low, body-wide fire that quietly ages skin.

HOW YOUR GUMS REACH YOUR SKIN

Gum disease raises the same inflammatory signals, like IL-6 and TNF, that break down collagen and slow repair in skin. Severe cases even track with faster cellular aging and shorter telomeres. So chasing glowing skin with serums while ignoring bleeding gums is treating the smoke and leaving the fire burning.

HOW TO SPOT GUM TROUBLE EARLY

- **Bleeding is the first warning.** Gums that bleed when you brush or floss are the earliest sign of trouble, not something normal to push through. Healthy gums don't bleed.
- **Look and feel.** Redness, puffiness, tenderness, gums pulling back from the teeth, stubborn bad breath, or teeth that feel loose or have shifted all deserve a professional look.
- **Get it measured.** A dentist or hygienist checks the little pockets around each tooth with a small probe and looks at x-rays for bone loss. Deeper pockets and lost bone are how gum disease is diagnosed and staged, and regular visits catch it early, while it's reversible.

WHAT ACTUALLY PREVENTS IT

The best-evidence basics are unglamorous: clean between your teeth every day, where small interdental brushes actually have better evidence than floss; use a powered toothbrush; and keep up regular professional cleanings to break up the bacterial film. One thing I'd skip for daily use is antibacterial mouthwash. It doesn't only kill the harmful bacteria, it wipes out the whole oral microbiome, the balanced community of bugs that actually helps keep your mouth and gums healthy. You don't want to carpet-bomb it every day.

Smart choices for what's in your mouth

METAL FILLINGS: MY TAKE

Silver amalgam fillings are about half mercury, and they give off a small amount of vapor every day for years. Population studies are reassuring at average exposure, but my own preference is to lower your lifetime metal load: I choose tooth-colored composite for any new work, and I lean toward replacing existing amalgam rather than adding more. The one non-negotiable is how it comes out. Drilling out amalgam creates a burst of mercury vapor, so removal should only be done by a dentist experienced in safe-removal protocols, with proper isolation, high-volume suction, and protection, so that spike stays out of your system. Done carelessly, removal can expose you to more than leaving it alone; done properly, it doesn't have to. One more note: some composites contain BPA-related compounds, so ask for a BPA-free option.

RETAINERS AND ALIGNERS

If you wear a retainer or clear aligners, they sit against your gums and in your saliva for hours a day. Where you have a choice, ask about PFAS-free materials, a low-effort way to trim one more daily plastic exposure.

HYDROXYAPATITE TOOTHPASTE: THE FLUORIDE-FREE OPTION I LIKE

If you'd rather skip fluoride, you have a genuinely good alternative, and it's not a downgrade. Hydroxyapatite is the mineral your tooth enamel is actually made of. The evidence is solid: a 2024 review of thirteen trials, plus randomized trials in adults and children, found hydroxyapatite toothpaste works about as well as fluoride for preventing cavities and rebuilding early enamel. And because it's simply the enamel mineral, it's safe if swallowed, which makes it an easy choice for young kids. It's what I point people toward when they want to protect their teeth without fluoride.

Feed your gums and your face

What you eat shows up in your gums quickly, and the same nutrients support your skin. As with the rest of the body, food beats supplements here.

- **Vitamin C, especially from food.** Vitamin C builds the collagen that holds gums, and skin, together. In national data, people with the highest vitamin C had far less severe gum disease, and a true shortage makes gums bleed within days. Get it from citrus, peppers, berries, and greens. One tip: citrus is acidic, so rinse with water after and wait a bit before brushing, to protect your enamel.
- **Vitamin D and calcium.** Together they support the bone that anchors your teeth, and have been shown to lower tooth loss. Test your vitamin D and dose to your actual level.
- **Omega-3s, and vitamins A and E.** Omega-3s help gums heal better after a deep cleaning, and diets richer in vitamins A and E track with less gum disease. It's the same anti-inflammatory, colorful-plants pattern that helps skin.
- **B12 and folate.** Low levels track with worse gum health and more bleeding. Worth checking if your gums stay stubborn, especially on a plant-based diet.

The bottom line

Your mouth is not separate from your face. Keep your teeth and actually chew, to protect the bone your face is built on. Keep your gums calm, to lower the inflammation that ages skin. Choose your fillings, retainers, and toothpaste thoughtfully. And feed your gums the same way you feed your skin. It's the inside-out approach, starting one step higher than most people ever look.

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

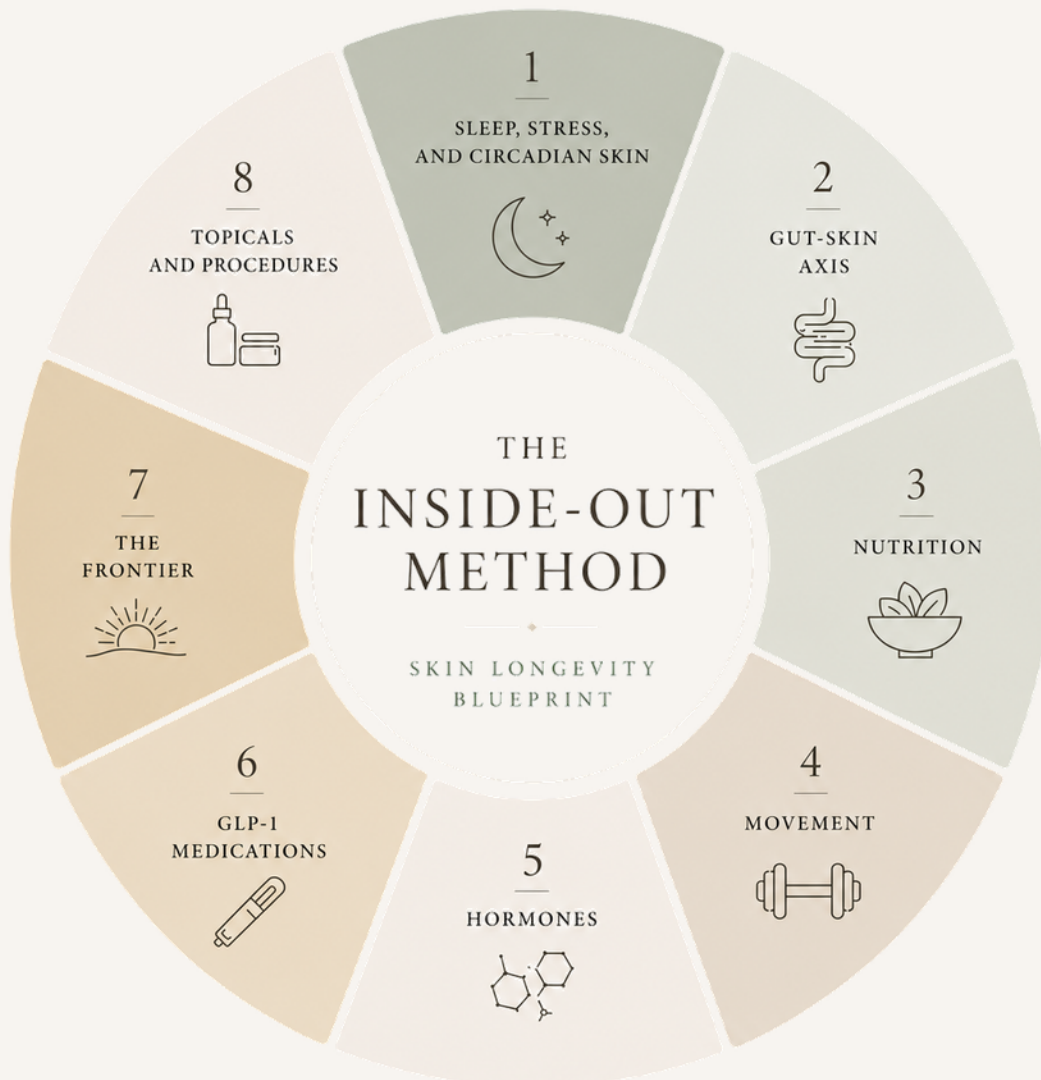
What you just read is a fraction of a single section. Each module breaks into short, digestible lessons you can do on your own schedule, with a workbook to make it stick and weekly live Q&A with me, over 8 to 10 weeks in a small cohort. It's the whole system, in the order that actually works.

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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