

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a grey sports bra, is performing a yoga pose with her arms raised above her head. She is looking upwards with a focused expression. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space with large windows.

A F R E E G U I D E

Strength Without Weights

Build the muscle your skin depends on — no gym, no barbell

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Why strength training is skin care

Muscle isn't just for the gym. When you work muscle against resistance, it releases signaling molecules called myokines, including one named IL-15, that act directly on skin cells to thicken the dermis and improve its structure. In a 16-week trial of previously sedentary women, resistance training measurably thickened the skin on biopsy, something cardio alone doesn't do. Women get steered toward cardio and miss this entirely.

MUSCLE IS AN ORGAN THAT TALKS TO YOUR SKIN

A contracting muscle behaves like an endocrine organ, releasing myokines into the bloodstream that lower body-wide inflammation, the low-grade fire that ages skin. More muscle also means better blood sugar control, and steadier sugar means less of the glycation that stiffens collagen. Working muscle even drives fresh blood flow to the skin, delivering the oxygen and nutrients repair runs on. One habit, working on your skin from several directions at once.

WHY THIS MATTERS MORE WITH AGE

After about thirty we slowly lose muscle, and in perimenopause the estrogen drop speeds the loss of muscle and collagen at once. Resistance training is one of the few things that pushes back on both. This isn't about bulking up. It's about keeping the tissue that holds your metabolism, your posture, and your skin.

THE GOOD NEWS: YOU DON'T NEED WEIGHTS

You don't need a barbell for any of this. The 2026 ACSM Position Stand explicitly endorses non-traditional resistance training as producing marked benefits, and the American Heart Association states that bodyweight training can be as effective as machines or free weights. Here is the evidence for each option, so you can pick the one you will actually keep doing.

Four ways to build strength without weights

- **Bodyweight.** Push-ups, squats, lunges, and dips build real strength and muscle. In sedentary young women, progressive bodyweight squats raised strength and muscle thickness similarly to weighted back squats; another trial matched free-weight hypertrophy and uniquely reduced intramuscular fat. Progress by making moves harder, not heavier: two-leg to single-leg squats, incline to decline push-ups, and slower tempo.
- **Resistance bands.** Among the best-supported options, and the most portable. Elastic tubing produced 16 to 44 percent strength gains over 12 weeks, on par with weight machines, and reviews confirm bands build strength, muscle, and function. Color-coded levels give you progressive overload, they're joint-friendly, and they cover the pulling moves, like rows, that bodyweight alone tends to miss.
- **Suspension training (TRX).** A 12-week randomized trial in older adults found hypertrophy and strength gains equivalent to traditional resistance training, with strong core and functional-movement demands from the added stabilization. One anchor point trains the whole body, and you scale difficulty just by changing where your feet stand.
- **Pilates.** Reliably improves muscular endurance, flexibility, core control, and balance, with more modest effects on maximal strength. It's effective and a great on-ramp, especially if you're deconditioned or working around back or joint issues, though not superior to the other methods for pure strength.
 - **Branded blends, like Pvolve.** Programs such as Pvolve mix bands, Pilates, and functional moves. Each ingredient is well-supported, so it works and can keep you consistent; just know there's no independent trial of the brand itself, so you're paying for structure and motivation, not a better method.

COVER ALL FOUR MOVEMENTS

Whatever tools you choose, train the four basic human movements, a push, a pull, a squat, and a hinge, plus something for the core. Bodyweight is strong on the push and squat; bands fill in the pull and hinge. Together they cover the whole body with nothing but a mat and a set of bands.

Smaller doses still work, and let something guide you

EVEN LESS TIME? STILL WORKS.

- **Exercise “snacking.”** Brief bouts of bodyweight moves, a few minutes once or more a day, build strength and break up long stretches of sitting, which helps your metabolism and skin on its own. Ten squats before your coffee counts.
- **Slow-tempo bodyweight.** Daily slow squats, push-ups, and sit-ups increased muscle mass in a randomized trial of older adults, the slower tempo adding the challenge with no load.

A SIMPLE STARTING FRAMEWORK

Per AHA guidance: 8 to 10 exercises for the major muscle groups, 1 to 3 sets of 8 to 12 reps, at least twice a week, against a difficulty that feels genuinely hard by the last two or three reps, that final effort is the signal that drives the adaptation. Progress with a tougher variation, more reps, slower tempo, or less rest.

LET AN APP OR TRAINER PLAN IT FOR YOU

You don't have to design this yourself. Plenty of apps and online trainers now coach bodyweight, band, and Pilates workouts with video demonstrations, built-in progressions, and a schedule, which solves the two things that actually derail people: not knowing what to do, and not staying consistent. Pick one that covers the major muscle groups, shows proper form, and steadily gets harder, and let it carry the planning.

IF YOU HAVE INJURIES, START WITH A PROFESSIONAL

One caveat before you begin. If you have a current or past injury, joint or heart issues, are pregnant, or have been sedentary a long time, check with your physician first, and consider a few sessions with a qualified trainer or physical therapist to learn safe form. Effort should challenge muscle, never create sharp joint pain.

The bottom line

You don't need a barbell to build the muscle your skin and metabolism lean on. Bands, your own bodyweight, TRX, or Pilates all work, and an app or trainer can plan it for you. Feed it enough protein, give a muscle group about 48 hours to recover, train the major muscles twice a week, clear it with your doctor if you have injuries, and let your muscle do what no serum can.

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

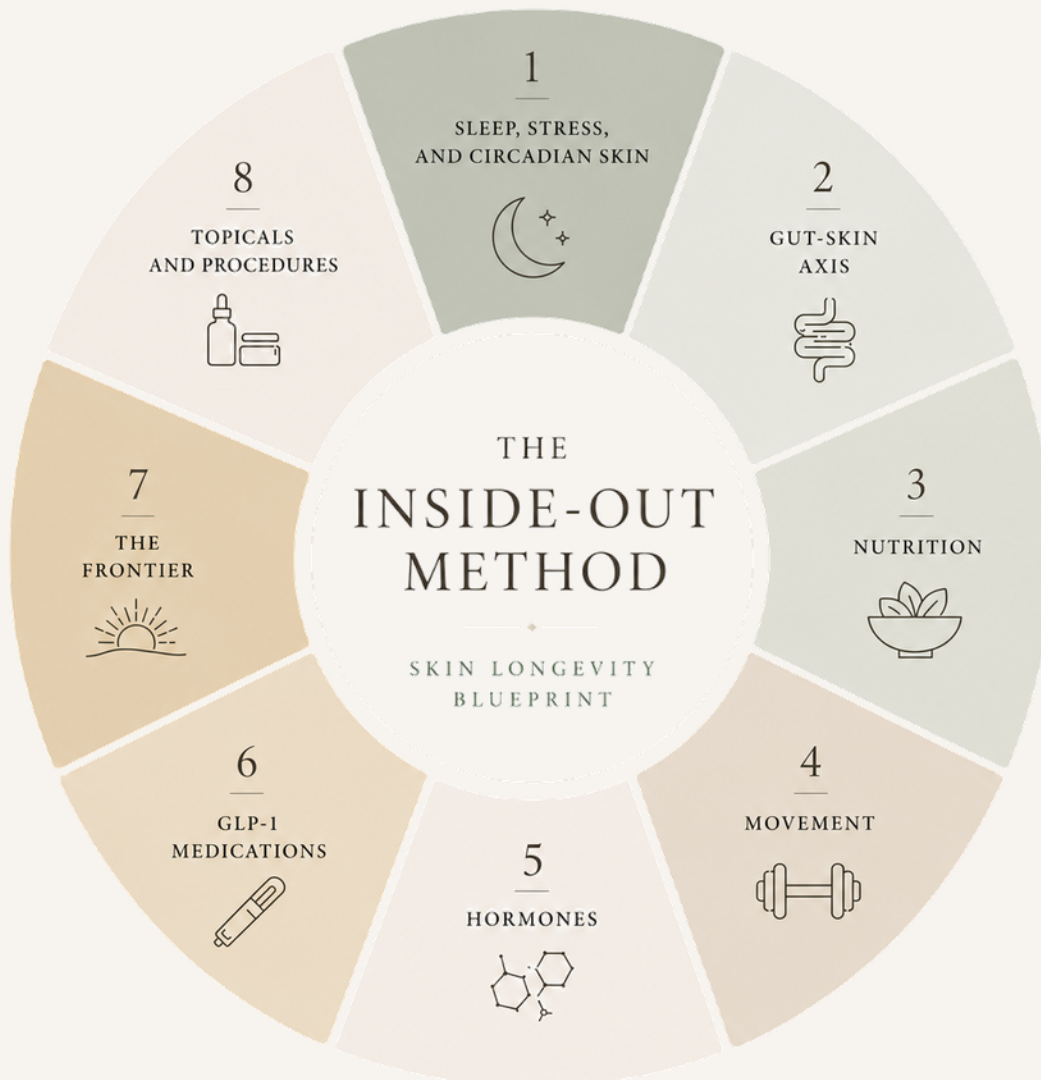
What you just read is a fraction of a single section. Each module breaks into short, digestible lessons you can do on your own schedule, with a workbook to make it stick and weekly live Q&A with me, over 8 to 10 weeks in a small cohort. It's the whole system, in the order that actually works.

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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