

ELLE

All Your Questions About Collagen, Answered

It's ingestible and injectable.



Oftentimes in the beauty world it feels like a new miracle product pops every couple of months—one that's *finally* going to clear up your skin and make you look like a baby again. Recently, collagen is being touted as one of those "miracle solutions in a bottle." You've probably heard of the beauty ingredient that is said to transform what you're currently working with to youthful, plumper skin. But does it actually live up to the hype? To learn more, we asked New York City dermatologist [Michelle Henry](#) for a collagen 101 explainer. Here's everything you need to know about protein and its many benefits.



Dermatologist [Michelle Henry](#)

What is collagen?

"Collagen is the main structural protein in the skin," explains Dr. Henry. "Collagen makes up one-third of the protein in the human body and it gives the skin its elasticity and strength, contributing to a youthful appearance." You can find it in a number of products from serums and moisturizers to injections, waters, and even [beers](#).

What are the benefits of collagen?

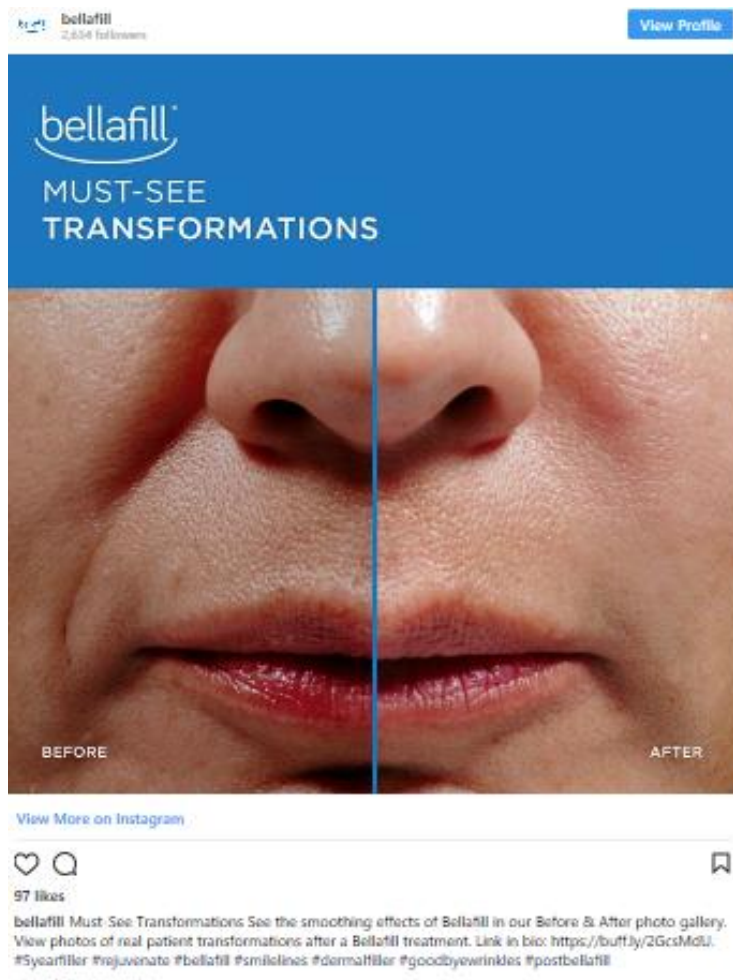
Adding collagen restores damage from sun exposure and other environmental factors, adding a youthful volume to the skin. It's also been used to restore brittle, broken nails, lessen back pain, and even prevent and help treat heart disease.

Is it safe to inject collagen?

Times have changed. It's now a lot safer to inject collagen since old complicated formulas have been updated. The science has significantly changed and the FDA has approved one injectable collagen product called Bellafill.

What is Bellafill?

"Bellafill is the only dermal filler that utilizes collagen and stimulates the body's own natural collagen growth long term, helping maintain a youthful appearance for up to five years when targeting nasolabial folds," explains Dr. Henry. It's ideal for deep smile lines and wrinkles but it's also useful for rolling acne scars along the cheeks and lasts for up to one year.



What about ingestible collagen?

Dr. Henry confirms it's very safe to ingest collagen. "We process it as a we do any other type of protein," says Henry. The current studies are mixed on whether the collagen we consume orally will be effectively stored in the skin to improve elasticity and strength. Before you start adding collagen to your water or crushing a couple collagen-enhanced cold ones with your buds, you might want to look into more beneficial forms.

What should you look for in collagen?

You should look for FDA approved products with proven science-backed efficacy. Dr. Henry explains that there are many products on the market that can easily confuse customers. It's important to read the labels and look for three main ingredients: collagen, elastin, and keratin. When the three ingredients work together in a solution, they provide the plumping and rebuilding of dead cells that deliver the youthful looks.

Dr. Henry also recommends being wary of collagen creams as they are unlikely to raise the skin's collagen levels as collagen molecules are large and not readily absorbed through the skin. That's not to say no creams work, you just have to make sure to do a bit a research before you purchase your dream cream.