

# COLLAGEN *explosion*

*Vitality's hottest ingredient is reaching maturity in the U.S. market*

**W**hat's the main ingredient in the fabled fountain of youth? Probably collagen. And, finally, Americans are realizing it. Sales of the ingredient are exploding as if somebody popped the cork on that fountain. *Nutrition Business Journal* (NBJ) analysts expect it to grow by 30 percent this year to reach an estimated \$122 million in consumer sales in 2018. That follows 19 percent growth between 2016 and 2017. Researchers forecast \$140 million in sales by 2019. Yes, collagen is hot. So what is it and what's driving growth? Here's a snapshot.

## INGREDIENT OVERVIEW

Collagen is the main ingredient that gives our body's tissue structure. A matrix of interwoven protein fibers, it's found everywhere from our hearts and biceps to our bones, teeth, skin and hair.

Collagen works in tissue like rebar works in the cement foundation of houses, providing a framework that holds everything together. It keeps connective tissue vibrant and flexible, from ligaments and tendons (which are comprised of 85 percent collagen) to skin (75 percent collagen). That bit of flexibility is critical. Without it, bones become brittle; skin stretches, sags and wrinkles; joints ache.

As we age, our collagen levels drop and we're slower to generate new collagen molecules. That begins even before we're old enough to buy alcohol to drown our wrinkling, aching, aging sorrows. Collagen production starts slugging around age 18. Fortunately, there's a growing variety of ways consumers can supplement their collagen levels, hence the growth of the collagen supplement category.

## GLOBAL PHENOMENON REACHES DOMESTIC TIPPING POINT

Consumers around the world have embraced collagen and the beauty-

from-within concept for years. Markets are most highly developed in Europe (especially France), South America and Japan, where the beauty-from-within belief dates back centuries. But today, the ingredient is also booming in the U.S., thanks to consumers seeking natural ways to look and feel their best—and companies delivering on safe, effective and even delicious ways to incorporate the ingredient into their lifestyles. Companies have invested

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heavily in new, innovative and more refined delivery systems such as powders and soft-chews to complement their supplement lines.

## THE COLLAGEN SHOPPER

The ingredient's science has also helped to develop trust among American consumers, particularly aging baby boomers who are warming to nutrition's potential to impact aging skin and creaky joints. And as collagen proves to be the darling of the nutricosmetics space, thanks to research backing its skin-supportive powers, millennials are also a key target market.

Collagen sales in the joint and bone health market are poised for huge growth, not just with the boomers (especially older athletes) but also with those active, Cross-fitting millennials seeking support and vitality. Manufacturers are beginning to create new, smart formulations to address the needs of consumers who are realizing the importance of collagen to bone and joint health. Consumer knowledge around the connection has significantly shifted in recent years. Pharmaca's vice president of integrative medicine and supplement buyer Don Summerfield sees the biggest opportunity for the ingredient this year in the bone and joint health category. »

## ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

NeoCell pioneered collagen's U.S. entry in 1998. The Irvine, California-based company remains America's leading collagen brand, with double-digit growth every quarter since 2008. Around that time, collagen began gaining traction with U.S. consumers as manufacturers refined formulations and people started warming to the idea that nutrition—rather than nip and tuck—may be a solution to aging skin and creaky joints. Collagen truly took off in 2015, when sales increased by 19 percent, according to *NBJ*.

## SCIENCE SAYS

Increasingly, science is supporting collagen's range of health benefits. But retailers need to do their research on manufacturers and request third-party certification on raw material sourcing to make sure they offer the highest quality supplements, according to Summerfield. When it comes to skin health, collagen's hydration benefits are potent. In one 2014 study, skin hydration increased by an average of 21 percent (and up to 50 percent) after 12 weeks among women between the ages of 30 and 50 who took 6 grams of BioActive NeoCell Collagen daily.

There's also a growing body of science backing collagen's ability to help our joints and its role as a long-term joint support supplement. Studies support a range of joint-related benefits. A 2015 study published in the *Journal of Science of Food and Agriculture*, for example, showed that collagen is absorbed well into joint tissue and that collagen can alleviate joint discomfort. This led researchers to state that collagen can be a useful tool for maintaining healthy joints. Many other studies have found similar results.

*When it comes to skin health, collagen's hydration benefits are significant.*

## EASY TO TAKE *delicious to taste*

While we don't yet have collagen beer, like in Japan where you can find a collagen-packed version of nearly everything, innovation and technology are driving new collagen delivery formats. Healthy flavorings and natural sweeteners have fueled formulations for gummies, bars, coffee creamers and more.

An increasing variety of collagen powders contributes to the growing popularity of using the ingredient in recipes that go way beyond smoothies. They provide an ideal way for paleo and keto diet consumers to add protein to their menu. "With the rise in whole-food supplements, customers are making the logical connection between their food and intake of dietary supplements," says Summerfield.

"Collagen is the perfect gateway product for this connection. Collagen is easy to incorporate into foods like yogurt, hot cereals, coffee and warm soups and stews."

Convenience is king and flavor is transforming consumers' daily dose from a chore to a treat. Collagen supplements in novel formats such as liquids, bars and gummies provide new, easy ways for consumers to sneak the ingredient into their every day routine. Additionally, the new formats appeal to pill-fatigued consumers, weary of choking down horse pills, as well as people who have trouble swallowing pills.

Mintel research reveals that gummy and other innovative applications are in high demand, and consumers are increasingly intrigued by inventive delivery methods such as candy (64 percent of supplement consumers surveyed were interested) and fortified drinks that can be consumed throughout the day (61 percent were interested). For the natural products

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shopper, it's key that these innovative deliveries also focus on the quality and purity of their ingredients (i.e. swapping artificial colors and sweeteners with plant-based alternatives).

## RETAIL TIPS



**Share the science.** Be sure staff is well-versed on current research and how the ingredient works in order to generate awareness and trust.



**Know the types.** Not all collagen is the same. Collagen types 1 and 3 are found together in the body in skin, ligaments, tendons and bones. They're the best choice for beauty benefits and supporting healthy bones and joints. Type 2 is a major component of joint cartilage.



**Beauty—and beyond.** Promote collagen as a powerful joint and bone health tool, too.



**Sample collagen in food and beverages.** Collagen powder-fortified smoothies, guacamole and coffee are easy ways to show customers they won't taste the easy-to-add ingredient.



**Cross-merchandise.** Display products among skin care, joint health and beauty sets to help customers discover new ways to incorporate the ingredient into their daily lifestyle.