



**The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast
Episode 14 Transcript**

Episode 14: Exploring the Benefits of Dietary Collagen for Skin, Joints & Overall Health with Molly Kimball, RD, CSSD

Molly Kimball:

Collagen is a protein that is found, it's in our own skin. It's in our own cartilage, our ligaments, our tendons. It's also in those same components of things like meat, fish, and poultry. But here in the US, we're typically not eating those parts of those animals.

Mary Purdy:

Welcome to The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast. I'm your host, Mary Purdy, integrative dietitian, and nutrition educator. And in today's episode, we are talking all about collagen. Joining us today is Molly Kimball, a registered dietitian who is Board-certified as a specialist in sports dietetics. Molly is a nutrition journalist and a practitioner with a passion for helping people live their healthiest, strongest lives. She is the founder of Ochsner Eat Fit, and host of the podcast FUELED wellness and nutrition with Molly Kimball. And as a sports and performance expert, Molly has been using and preaching the benefits of collagen supplements for over a decade to support her and her client's joint health, in addition to improving the health of her gut and skin, hair, and nails. Welcome, Molly. Great to have you.

Molly Kimball:

Welcome. It's exciting to be here. Thank you.

Mary Purdy:

Now, collagen is really hot these days. It seems like everyone's talking about it. They're taking it. It's being added into everything, but actually, collagen seems like it's been around for a while, and you've been using it and recommending it for over a decade. Why are you such a proponent of it, and why did you start taking it yourself?

Molly Kimball:

I started thinking about how long have I been taking it? I think it's been about 15 years now. I was a runner for years. I had just continuous pain with that. With the ligaments, with the tendons, with the bursa. And so, the first reason I reached for collagen was kind of falling under that every little bit helps. And 15 years ago especially, we didn't have the data, the research that we have now on collagen. But what would be the harm? None. So, let's do it. And it would also be an additional source of protein, so why not? Let's just try it.

Over time, you start adding different things, and you realize something's helping here, and so I'm very consistent with things. Once I add something in and I feel or see I can tell a benefit, I think that's the other real big key is we don't just haphazardly have it a couple of times a week. We want to be really diligent with something to give it that true go, to see if we see a benefit. And then I started seeing other things. My skin, my nails were growing really quickly. My hair was growing really quickly. So, I saw these other benefits and I'm like, well, shoot, let's just keep on taking it.



Mary Purdy:

Well, it always shocks me how many personal stories people have. When they become an expert in something, it usually happens as a result of something personal that happened to them or a friend or a family. Once again, here's another personal story about your journey here. And you mentioned data. You mentioned research. What are the benefits of taking collagen?

Molly Kimball:

Well, we mentioned joint health. When we look at helping to support the health of those ligaments, the tendons, something like supplement with collagen, we're not going to offset damage that we might be doing by our choices, by our behaviors. But when we're doing the other things, we're being mindful of the activities that we're putting our bodies through, what we're asking our bodies to do. We're being mindful of stretching or things like the physical therapy movements we might learn and being consistent with these, then something like adding collagen in can be that extra layer, that little extra edge to help boost that health of our ligaments, of our tendons.

And then we talked about the healthy hair, skin, and nails. Supplementing with collagen basically helps to reduce that collagen breakdown, and when we look at our skin, some of that result can be supporting better skin hydration, better skin elasticity. I actually was just at the dermatologist yesterday. This is a one-off, this is a just anecdotal Molly story, but I'm 47, and we were talking about a particular product that she was recommending for my skin, and she said, "When someone's at 50 or over, I recommend this version of it. Under 50, I recommend this version of that brand." I said, "Well, I'm 47, so I'm closer to 50. Should I do that?" She said, "Your chronological age is 47, but," she said, "your skin is a decade younger."

And I'm outside a lot, of course, sunscreen and all of that. But in spite of being outside and in spite of having that exposure, all the different things that we do and, of course, as dietitians, all the other things that we're putting into our bodies. But the way I look at it is supplementing with something like collagen is just one more way that we can help to add these benefits to our bodies.

And on the skin note, I would also say that that's in theory. I think it's really hard to separate the collagen that we are consuming and knowing what exactly is happening as that collagen is digested because collagen is a protein. And so, is our body assimilating this to help prevent collagen breakdown in our skin, so in theory. But everyone is, of course, going to digest nutrients differently. If someone were maybe deficient in protein in their diet, it's possible that protein through collagen might be used for other support in the body. That our body might use other types of protein for. The other thing I would say that we don't want to overlook is the benefit of GI health. Gut health. That protective lining gastrointestinally, the protective effect to the lining.

Mary Purdy:

So, you're saying that it supports joint health, ligament health, tendon health, and that it also can help to prevent the breakdown of our own skin collagen. These are great, great benefits. For those who may not be familiar with what collagen is, tell us exactly what is collagen and where does it come from?

Molly Kimball:



When we look at what collagen is, the collagen powder, I feel, is just the easiest way to supplement with it. You often see it as collagen peptides. And typically, I'll recommend about 10 grams a day. 20 grams is what I'll usually do, but at least a minimum of 10 grams a day. Collagen is a protein that is found, it's in our own skin. It's in our own cartilage, our ligaments, our tendons. It's also in the same components of things like meat, fish, and poultry. But here in the US, we're typically not eating those parts of those animals.

We're not eating the ligaments, the tendons, the tubules that you might see. If you're going to other countries, they consider that the norm of what they're eating is these collagen-rich ligaments and tendons. But for us, we want the muscle part of that protein. And so, they may be shifting it to us while they're keeping the other parts. So here in the US, I find that something like collagen powder can just make it so much more efficient because while we can get it through our diet, it's not something that we typically do, especially here in the US.

Mary Purdy:

And you mentioned that it's a protein. So, can people use it as a way to add to their protein needs for the day?

Molly Kimball:

Absolutely. And if someone is already maybe doing a protein smoothie, well, instead of doing a scoop of whey protein, we could do collagen instead. It's interesting. We can talk about in a minute or whenever it's fitting for our flow. We can talk about how people can use it. But if you'll notice that if you're putting a scoop, say, into your smoothie or your coffee, and the powder gets on your fingers, I'm showing you visually, but it's not coming across, of course, in the audio. I'm putting my fingers together as if they're sticking together. It's a little gluey. And so, if you did get some of that powder on it, and it got a little moisture, it's gluey, it's sticky, just like you would imagine that collagen is. Again, we're talking about the ligaments, the tendons, that stickiness, that gluey part in our bodies.

And so, if you had just a regular whey protein, it feels a little more dusty, and you could almost wipe it off easily, whereas the collagen is sticky. So that's something that when you're looking at just what part of the properties are, but as you're blending it into a smoothie, putting it into your coffee, it really dissolves well. And it's not making it thicker, gooey, or sticky in those things. But if you were to put it in baked goods that you might otherwise be using protein in, sometimes it's going to work. Sometimes it's going to not because of that property. So, you want to experiment with a smaller batch first.

Mary Purdy:

So how do you respond to somebody who might say, well, collagen isn't a complete protein. For instance, it's missing tryptophan, which is an important amino acid?

Molly Kimball:

When I look at foods being complete proteins or not, because most of us are going to get the array of amino acids throughout the course of our day, I'm less concerned about are we consuming a complete protein in one space.

Mary Purdy:



So as long as you're getting a varied diet with a variety of different protein sources and even non-typical protein sources that still have amino acids, you're going to meet those needs at some point throughout the day.

Molly Kimball:
Exactly.

Mary Purdy:
And you mentioned chicken, you mentioned beef, you mentioned fish, and maybe I'll throw a little pig in there as well, but where is collagen derived or extracted from, and does it something that you only can supplement or can you actually eat those parts of the animal?

Molly Kimball:
Yeah. So, you can eat those parts of the animal. A lot of people are not accustomed to it, and it might not seem appealing or appetizing if they're not accustomed to it. I think about one of my best friends has lived in Asia for years, and when we go visit her, and we're walking through the markets, especially the night markets where they have all the different foods and things, there's a lot of feet that people are eating of different sources. And there's a lot of soups that have the tubules, the tendons, the ligaments in it. And so, it's very unusual to someone who's not accustomed to seeing that. So, while we can eat it, we often aren't typically consuming that. I would say probably an easy way though, for us to have collagen just through our diet without supplementing with it is something like bone broth. And you can do bone broth with beef-based or chicken-based bone broth where the bone broth, it's long simmered.

Those bones are long simmered in there. Slow and low temperature. And it's pulling the collagen from the bones into that broth. And so, if you look at you're in the grocery store, even regular mainstream grocery stores are starting to have bone broth more and more now. If you looked at typical, say, beef broth or chicken broth or stock, we're looking at zero, maybe one gram of protein per cup. Whereas the bone broth may have seven, 10 grams of protein per cup. And that's almost entirely collagen that's going to be making up that difference there because of that low, slow simmer. So, while we may not be reaching for those foods that are the ligaments or tendon type foods, something like bone broth, if you're a soup person, that's so easy. Just switch to having that bone broth as your base instead of maybe your usual chicken stock or beef stock.

Mary Purdy:
And we know that the animal's meat is going to be dictated or the quality of that meat, the content that meat is going to be dictated by the animal's diet. Maybe perhaps higher in omega-three fatty acids if they consume grass. Is there a difference between collagen sources of animals that are grass-fed versus conventionally raised? What are your thoughts there?

Molly Kimball:
I haven't seen research that is looking at the effectiveness of how when we're supplementing with collagen, if it's collagen that has derived from grass-fed or grain-fed. I do think that many people, for environmental reasons, for animal welfare reasons, we would want to look at animals that were raised under those stricter standards. But it's something that the data to say that nutritionally, it's going to make a difference, I haven't seen that. And when we look at the different sources of collagen, the two



main that I'll see available, bovine, which is cow-based, and then also marine-based collagen. So typically, if you're seeing collagen peptides in the store on shelves, it's often going to be bovine. Marine is an option though, for someone who may not... They're choosing not to consume beef-related products for whatever reason that might be.

Mary Purdy:

And there are different types of collagen from what I hear. Type one, type two, type three. What should we be looking for in the products that are out there and what are the benefits of the different types?

Molly Kimball:

So, when we look at the types one, two, and three, types one and three have the most support for the claims on skin, or hair, or nails, some on joints. Type two, there is some emerging research on type two with joints. What I'll say is when I'm looking at products, or I'm looking at types of collagen in the stores, it's not always easy to see what type it is that we're purchasing. So, I'm usually just encouraging someone if they're going to go collagen, let's just go collagen peptides. Let's go with a reputable brand. Let's go with a product just like we do with any supplements. We want to make sure that we've got something that what it says on the label is actually in the container. So, while types one and three have a lot of data as far as our skin, our hair, our nails, our joints, that's not to say that type two is bad. And there is, again, like I said, more emerging data on type two. So, for me, I don't look so much at the type because also, it's not always easily visible on the labeling.

Mary Purdy:

Got it. And you mentioned 10 grams that you recommend. You also mentioned bone broth. What is the amount that is needed to see results and to feel better in your joints? Or see noticeable things in your skin?

Molly Kimball:

10 grams is often what you'll see in studies on it. I would look at usually 10 grams or 20 grams a day if someone is going to do it twice a day. I don't think that's a bad thing to get 20. I especially think we're adding even 20 grams at once. A lot of products, one scoop has 10 grams of protein. Sometimes, one scoop might give you 20 grams of protein from collagen, but often, one scoop is 10. So, you might easily do two scoops in that coffee or two scoops in that smoothie. You're getting 20 grams of protein. Not everything when it comes to supplements is a more is better approach. But in something like that, we're so far from going overboard if we're even doing 20 grams. And with looking at 10 being what is shown effective in some studies, I see nothing wrong with adding 10, but I also would add 20 if that's something that is a challenge for people to get that protein in their diets.

Mary Purdy:

So, 10 to 20 grams of protein. And usually, that's designated on the amount that's maybe in a scoop that you might buy. And you said collagen in coffee, collagen in smoothie. I have a feeling there's some people out there who are going, I'm not messing with my coffee and putting collagen in there. What about the flavor? What about the taste for those who may be a little bit nervous about eating something that might taste like a hoof?

Molly Kimball:



Yeah. So, we typically say it's odorless, it's tasteless. It has no smell. It has no flavor. It dissolves really easily. And it's so interesting. I have some people who are like, I can't even tell it's in there. They've put it in their regular hot coffee or ice coffee, their smoothies. There's different recipes, especially if you can do collagen balls with some date puree. There's just all different things that we can do that are just nice ways that we can add collagen in. I'll have, I would say 80% of the people say, I'm good with it. Others are like, they're accusatory. You said it didn't have a flavor, it didn't have a taste. But they can still pick up on it. And they're just distressed about it. And they're really sensitive. And I do think you're right.

A lot of times it is their coffee, because that's the last thing you want to mess with is someone's coffee. But there are, I would say far more people who are able to add a scoop, two scoops to their coffee, to that iced coffee, whatever it is. We also call, if you're doing a smoothie and you have like a little iced coffee concentrate and you're, we call it a collagen cafe frappe. And that's like a nice way to almost have, instead of like the sugary version of a coffee shop frappe, frozen kind of coffee drink, it's a really nice way to do it at home. The little ice coffee concentrate, your milk of choice or non-milk of choice, unsweetened almond milk, or coconut milk, and then a scoop or two of that collagen. And then some ice, blend it up.

It's your collagen cafe frappe. You could do it. Vanilla or chocolate. I find that is almost always a crowd pleaser. In iced coffee, you might have to kind of stir it just a bit more, but it still does dissolve pretty well. 80% of the time, I would say, people are like, yeah, this is great. I didn't even notice it. There are some flavored collagens that are vanilla flavored or chocolate or others. I find most people do prefer just the unflavored. But then you do occasionally have someone who really wants the ones that have that add flavored. But I find it's much more versatile when you're going with the unflavored versions.

Mary Purdy:

So, collagen cafe frappe. And for those of us who drink tea, I've actually tried it in a green matcha tea and a chai matcha tea. And for those folks who may not drink coffee, drink tea, or maybe not be a smoothie person, how else can we get collagen powder let's say in there? You mentioned some little energy bites. What else would it fit into?

Molly Kimball:

When you add protein to a baked good, it's going to affect the texture. Some types of proteins can make things a little fluffier. Collagen because of the kind of sticky nature that we talked about is going to behave a little bit differently. So, if you had something that was a denser baked good anyway, adding that collagen, you can use that in place of a little bit of whatever the flour would be. But just play around with it, play around with the ratio. So, you can do it in baked goods.

I've had people tell me they put it into even things like soups, sauces that is it's going to thicken it. And I've tried it myself in different soups or things just to add it in there. And you can see it maybe darkens the color a little bit. It makes it just a slight bit thicker, but I don't mind it at all. So, I've done it into soups. I've done it into sauces. I haven't tried it in something like a red sauce or something like that someone may have over chicken or fish, but I have tried it in other sauces. Some of our favorite Indian dishes or Thai dishes, when you have a lot of that sauce, I've put a scoop or two of collagen in that just to see, and it's made it a little thicker, but I like it.



Mary Purdy:

Okay, well, let's take a brief pause to hear from our sponsor Orgain, and we will be right back.

Interested In giving collagen a try? Orgain is excited to offer Orgain collagen plus super foods available exclusively at Costco. This truly flavorless collagen is packed with 20 grams of grass-fed pasture raised collagen peptides to support hair, skin, nails, and joints. It also contains 11 superfoods, providing a natural source of polyphenols and vitamin C to support collagen absorption and synthesis. Combine one scoop with any 12-ounce beverage or try in your favorite baked goods. Visit orgain.com to learn more. All right, let's get back to our conversation.

Following up on the gut health, is there enough research that really supports the impact of collagen on our guts?

Molly Kimball:

The deal with collagen and research period is there's so much more research that is needed. A lot of the research that we have is still anecdotal, it's observational. It's not so much double-blind controlled studies. And so, when we're looking at these things that we talk about, joint health, gut health, skin, hair, nails, a lot of times it is, again, almost all observational, anecdotal, and it falls onto that is it going to be harmful? No.

I mean, for almost all of us, it can just be beneficial because it is that potential extra edge. It is that extra way we can add protein. However, when we say is the science just airtight? No, because there hasn't been so many of the double-blind controlled studies that we would say are kind of like a gold standard clinical trial to assess it. So, I want to be really clear on that, that when we are talking about, okay, let's take it for our joint health, let's take it for our gut health, let's take it for our skin, all of these reasons. There's a lot that points to it's really likely that it's going to support these, but there is still an element of just how much success will see from that.

Mary Purdy:

And I've seen some research specifically related to osteoarthritis, and you've been working with folks who are in the sports world and you've used it for yourself. Can you share with us a story either of your own personal experience or perhaps a patient that you've worked with who's actually seen benefits or shifts in how their joints are working or how their arthritis is improving as a result of taking collagen?

Molly Kimball:

I would say the benefits that we see are often when it's in tandem with other changes also. So, when we're working with someone and just coming in from scratch and they may have conditions like this, one thing that we would do is adding in collagen. Another is going to be, what are the things that we can do that are going to... I wouldn't limit it to just osteoarthritis either, I would say really so many of the different conditions that someone may have, we're looking at a lot of different changes we're going to be making across the board. We're going to limit inflammatory foods. We're going to limit added sugars. We're going to increase plant-based fats, limiting as much of the animal-based fats, let's emphasize more plant-based fats. They may be not well hydrated coming into us. Let's look at their hydration status.



Let's look at how much are they pounding on their body? Let's look at modifying so that we're not having just overuse, overuse of the same types of movements. Let's add an element of we call it cross training. So, we're kind of mixing things up. So, there's so much as they're working with us, as they're working with one of our trainers or physical therapists that we're looking at changing. So, I can't think of someone who the only thing they came in and we changed was to say, let's add collagen in and they had all these benefits. But when we are looking at what are some of these other things that we can tease out, and we're hearing that there's just a gap for improvement, we're usually layering collagen in with a bunch of other whole-body changes. So, there's a lot of changes that we're often incorporating, one of those being collagen.

Mary Purdy:

Yeah. So, it really is a constellation of factors, not just the collagen. I've heard anti-inflammatory diet, hydration, lower impact, or considering the impact. Cross-training, reducing alcohol. So many pieces go into what it means to have a healthy and vibrant body. And especially as it relates to exercise. So, thank you for thinking about it in that holistic way, which I think is ultimately how we need to think about everything when it comes to health and wellness. And you've given such great information today. I'm curious if someone were to say, gosh, I've never taken collagen before, or perhaps a practitioner's out there saying, I don't really recommend this. Where would you recommend someone start with including collagen in their daily regimen as part of this holistic picture of wellness?

Molly Kimball:

Right. So, I think that's a great question. If they're talking to a practitioner and the practitioner says I don't recommend it, well there's a big difference. And as also as a dietitian yourself, like we know there are a lot of practitioners who aren't familiar with supplements and that's okay, but that also doesn't mean that just because they're not familiar with it doesn't mean that the supplements don't have some benefit. It can be stunning to me the lack of support that some practitioners will have for supplements of other types that can be really successful when someone adds them into their lifestyle and into their protocol. And sometimes just because it falls under that category of supplements, immediately there's doubt cast on it. And so, I would say for the majority of people, there's very few people that we would say there would be any reason not to take something like collagen.

And even when we say the science is not airtight, we don't have a plethora of double-blind placebo controlled studies on collagen that are truly tracking exactly, like we say, controlled to where we know that the only difference here in all of these factors is collagen intake. That just isn't happening. So, it is possible that a practitioner would say, you know what, there's not hard data on it. There's not hard science for me to support this. And you could understand why a practitioner might say that for these reasons. On the flip side, I would say if someone wants to take it looking at it as part of their protein source, especially if someone maybe has a challenge getting that protein in, well then why not? Let's try it. And so, I think some of the easiest ways to do it are what are you having already in your day that you can sort of layer it into?

So, if someone's a coffee drinker in the morning and we can put collagen into that coffee or that iced coffee, or if someone is doing one of these coffee shop sugary, frozen blended things in the afternoon, and we can do our own collagen cafe frappe, we might end up saving money. It would also be lower sugar, more nutritious for us giving us that protein. So, what are we already doing through our day that



might be an opportunity for us to put that scoop or two scoops of collagen into it that can also be, as we said, kind of early on, consistency is key.

So instead of having it maybe just twice a week and then deciding, oh, this isn't doing anything, we really need to be consistent on close to a daily basis. So, what are some things you can put it into? So, I would say kind of looking to see those that we talked about are sort of the easys because people are often doing those daily. If they're a coffee drinker, it's often daily. How can we slip that in? And again, if you're kind of getting like the side eye from your practitioner, like, I'm not so sure about this. Who have you been talking to that you want to come in here and try some collagen here? Just saying, well, is there any reason I shouldn't? Or could I supplement with it just like I would add another source of protein into my diet?

Mary Purdy:

So, it sounds like it can fit into people's lives in a lot of different ways, starting with simple additions to things they're already doing, checking with their healthcare practitioner to make sure that it's a good idea for them to take it, and finding out ways to include it in a way that supports their gut, their skin, their hair, their nails, and of course their joints. So, before we wrap up, Molly, tell us a little bit more about Eat Fit and how folks can learn more about it.

Molly Kimball:

Yeah. So, Eat Fit, it's just a really cool initiative. So as registered dietitian this summer, it actually will be 23 years that I've been a registered dietitian with Ochsner fitness center. And Ochsner is a large health system here across the Gulf South. Eat Fit was born of the concept of, hey, let's work with restaurants and chefs and incorporate nutritious items onto their menus. We launched it in 2013, it's totally free. So, we operate as a nonprofit. We work with restaurants, also festivals now that will have Eat Fit on their menu boards, the super dome, our airport here in New Orleans. And we now have six dietitians in cities across the state of Louisiana working. So, we have Eat Fit Shreveport, Eat Fit Baton Rouge, Eat Fit Acadiana, Eat Fit NOLA for New Orleans. So, six regions and just under 600 restaurant partners that have that Eat Fit seal on the menu. So, it's just been a really beautiful thing to see the community, the chefs, the restaurants just embrace it and to see this grow.

Mary Purdy:

Excellent. Well, when we talk about nutrition, we can always use a little bit more fun. So, thank you so much for being on this show today. And it was a pleasure speaking with you.

Molly Kimball:

Yes. Thank you.

Mary Purdy:

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