

Understanding Skin Care Ingredients

Natural vs. Traditional, and What You Need

The use of chemicals in cosmetics and skin care products is something we hear about more and more. Some natural alternatives to chemicals exist, but many cosmetic companies won't use them because they are more costly and less readily available. While most products cannot be 100 percent natural (because of bacterial growth), many natural alternatives to harsh chemicals can be helpful and effective in skin care.

For example, cosmetics often need preservatives. Pre-bottled products must contain a good preservative to control the growth of bacteria, molds, and yeasts. Bacteria can grow in an unpreserved product in a matter of days. While some natural preservatives can

There is an emerging interest by manufacturers and consumers in natural preservatives. This is where your licensed esthetician can assist you in identifying the right professional product (as opposed to an over-the-counter product) that will be best for your skin. Manufacturers are now looking to the past and using exotic flowers, herbs, and oils that were used thousands of years ago. When present in sufficient percentages in products, many of these natural ingredients can be effective for cleansing, rebalancing, and reducing the signs of age.

Some companies make claims their products are 100 percent natural. Often the chemicals, such as cosmetic



Knowing the ingredients in your skin care products can help you achieve your skin care goals.

help stabilize a product, a chemical preservative is probably needed for proper protection. Yet, many products on the market contain unnecessarily high percentages of preservatives to achieve longer shelf lives. Usually less than 1 percent of the cosmetic preservative is sufficient to stabilize a product for a shelf life of one to two years.

preservatives, are hidden in the ingredient list. For example, a company can claim their product contains no preservatives and you may not recognize one on the ingredient list. But some may contain alcohol (ethanol, ethyl, or isopropyl), which will dehydrate and irritate your skin. Keep in mind that

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"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."

- W. A. Ward

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alcohol is a naturally occurring chemical; some forms are beneficial and moisturizing to skin, such as cetyl and cetearyl.

Below are some natural ingredients that may be appropriate to replace chemical formulations that can be hard on the skin.

Natural Preservatives

These can be found in many forms, including grape seed extract, food-grade preservatives (such as citric acid, orris root powder, potassium sorbate, and sodium benzoate), pure essential oils, and vitamin E oil or extract. These can help control some bacterial growth and help maintain shelf life. Body and bath oils, bath salts, powdered clay or grain-based products, and salves are among the products that don't need cosmetic chemical preservatives.

Corn and Sugar

These two ingredients, along with others, can undergo a process that produces a mild lathering agent. Some products found in health food stores feature this natural lathering agent in shampoos.

Natural Carrier Oils

An alternative to mineral oil, natural carrier oils (like apricot kernel, almond, jojoba, vitamin E, and others) can help to nourish, moisturize, and soften skin. They are excellent for body massage and can be blended and used directly on skin.

Pure Essential Oils

High-grade essential oils are extracted from flowers, herbs, leaves, stems, and roots by a steam distillation process. Each essential oil has its own unique properties and can be helpful both externally (topically) and internally via aromatherapy. Avoid synthetic essential oils; it can be highly irritating just to smell them, let alone put them on your skin.

Natural Colors

Some alternatives to artificial colors that may be available are carrot oil, chlorophyll, and naturally colored clays. You may pay more for them; many cosmetic companies avoid using these as they are difficult to find and are much more expensive than traditional options.

Herbal Extracts

Herbal extracts are more concentrated than other formulations and can be beneficial to skin. Some of the more popular extracts include aloe, chamomile, green tea, kelp/seaweed, and marigold. They do, however, often contain grain alcohol or synthetic glycerin. Vegetable glycerin is a natural alternative.

Oatmeal

This is an excellent skin cleaner. Oatmeal gently removes dead skin cells while cleaning and softening skin. It can be found in body masks, facial masks, and facial scrubs. While many facial scrubs contain ingredients like kernels and walnut shells, which can be too rough on the face, a gentle ingredient like oatmeal is a great alternative.

Fruit Acids

Fruit acids and alpha hydroxy acids can be helpful in removing dead skin cells, enabling new cell growth. In general, these fruit acids can be too strong for those with sensitive skin. Your esthetician can help you discern which products contain these acids and in what percentages.

Natural Fruit Enzymes

Papaya and pineapple contain enzymes that can help to gently remove dead skin cells, renew the skin, and improve circulation.

There are times when returning to the simpler ways of the past reaps big benefits. There are many different ways to let natural ingredients help you look and feel your best. Your licensed esthetician can help you make good decisions about what products--natural or not--are best for your lifestyle, skin care needs, and preferences.



Herbals extracts, like aloe, can contribute to healthy skin, without the use of harsh chemicals.

Benefits of Peptides

Janet McCormick

Peptides are strings of amino acids, held together by nitrogen and carbon bonds. Under the microscope, they have a similar appearance to a string of pearls. Peptides have been around since the birth of tissue, and scientists recognize them as the building blocks of life. In the skin, peptides occur naturally to keep the skin firm. In skin care products, lab-created peptides work from the inside out to address a host of facial issues, especially wrinkles.

The pivotal benefit of peptides in skin care is their ability to penetrate the skin. This is a result of their size at a molecular level. Peptides consist of up to 100 amino acids strung together, so they are actually mini-proteins: chains of 100-200 amino acids are called polypeptides, and chains of more than 200 are simply called proteins.

Long-chain proteins, such as collagen, can only be applied to the surface of the skin, because their molecular size makes it impossible for them to go deeper. The best they can do is to act as a temporary

moisture barrier to promote hydration and softness. But when these long-chain proteins are broken into shorter chains (peptides), skin penetration becomes possible.

Peptides are non-invasive ingredients that have been proven to produce results, so they are great options for incorporating into a skin care regimen. Know, however, that peptides are not quick and magic potions. Their one drawback is that they take time because they build from within the skin, not from peeling the outer surface. The positives of this approach: stronger skin, less or no irritation, and no free-radical stimulation.

Janet McCormick is a spa consultant with considerable experience in skin care, nails, and spa management. She holds a master's degree in allied health management, as well as a Comite International D'Esthetique et de Cosmetologie (CIDESCO) diploma.



Ask a skin care professional about products for you.

Try This Breathing Exercise

Anne Williams

Do you ever find yourself unconsciously holding your breath when you're tense? This can cause tension to build in your body and may let the chest collapse, leading to misalignment.

Proper breathing provides oxygen to the muscles and body, helps you stay relaxed and centered, and even helps you maintain correct body alignment throughout your day.

You can also use breathwork as part of a stress-reduction program by following this progressive relaxation exercise.

1. Begin by lying in a comfortable position without crossing your arms or legs, and focus on your breathing to create a slow, deep pattern. Inhale through your nose while counting to 10 and expanding your abdomen. Hold the breath for one second, and exhale through your nose on the count of 10. Inhale and exhale in this pattern five times.

2. Beginning with your head, tense your facial muscles as tightly as possible and count to five. Release the muscles

completely, and sense the muscles feeling heavy and still. Work down your entire body, tensing muscle groups and then relaxing them. After the head, move to the neck, chest, arms and hands, abdomen, back, thighs and gluteals, lower legs, and feet.

3. After relaxing each set of muscles, mentally scan your body for any areas of remaining tension and ask those areas to relax completely.

4. Repeat the slow breathing exercise.

5. Gently begin to move your body to come out of the deeply relaxed state.

Try using progressive relaxation directly before or after your sessions, directly before bed, or at any time during the day as a pick-me-up. Focus on taking full, deep, even, rhythmic breaths. With a little practice, you can become more aware of your own breathing patterns and use breathwork effectively as you move throughout your day.

*"Acknowledging
the good that
you already have
in your life is the
foundation for
all abundance."*

-Eckhart Tolle

Hey there Leading Lady! I hope you have enjoyed this month's issue of the Leading Lady Newsletter. I have am grateful that you've invested a couple of minutes in yourself to read through the articles. Have a productive and fulfilling month!

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MEMBER

