

Lorelei Looker

Homemade Cosmetics:
The Right Way to Love the Skin You're In

A vital piece of maintaining health is caring for all of our organs. Each one plays a unique role in the delicate balance of our bodies. All organs need love and attention. It is crucial that no organ gets neglected, because they are deeply interconnected. In modern society, however, that sacred interconnectedness is constantly ignored. People seldom consider the well being of most of their organs. For instance, few people regularly ponder about the well being of their pancreas, which constantly secretes enzymes that are pivotal for digestion; or their lymph nodes, which transport lymph throughout the body and enable immunity.

Even parts of the body that people show concern for are still neglected often due to ignorance about what they need. They are voluntarily exposed to harmful chemicals in an effort to maintain them. These chemicals are marketed as medicines and treatments, which deceives people in to thinking they are appropriate. There is one especially important organ that is particularly harmed by these lies. This organ is the largest of them all, yet one of the most sensitive (Neal's Yard Remedies). This organ also eliminates waste and cleanses the body (Neal's Yard Remedies). It protects the body from exterior harms, like bacteria, viruses, and UV rays (Carpenter). It also has an important role in regulating body temperature. To the disbelief of many, this organ is very much alive (Neal's Yard Remedies). Its many cells are in a constant flow of death and regeneration, cycling through about ten billion cells every day! This vital organ is the skin.

Many people think our skin is hungry for conventional cosmetic products, filled with alcohol and chemicals that are foreign to our body. The skin, however, absorbs externalities (Rano). Cosmetic products have no legal obligation to be reviewed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), nor does the FDA mandate that companies test the safety of their products (Rano). Consequently, over 500 cosmetic products sold in the United States have ingredients that are illegal in Japan, Canada, and the European Union (Rano). About 100 products have ingredients considered unsafe by the International Fragrance Association (Rano). Many of these U. S. sold products contain phthalate plasticizers, paraben preservatives, synthetic musks, and the infamous pesticide triclosan. These are likely endocrine disruptors, which cause feminization in the reproductive system of males, sperm damage, and low birth weight in females (Rano). There are also many chemicals in fragrances and additives that are not even required by law to be listed in the ingredients (Rano). Many of these products also have penetration enhancers, which allow these chemicals to seep deeper through our already absorptive skin and cause even more harm (Rano). Products marketed to be “organic” and “natural” are also as free from governmental review. They can contain many types of preservatives and synthetic chemicals and. Thirty-five percent of “natural” products for children contain artificial preservatives (Rano). Products can also still be considered organic if they contain as little as ten percent organic ingredients by weight or volume (Rano).

Many cosmetic products and ingredients sold in the U. S. are also tested on animals for disheartening things like skin irritancy, sensitivity to light, and acute toxicity (Haron). Europe banned the sale and importation of products utilizing animal testing for these things in 2009, and although the majority of U. S. citizens are against such

practices, there is no regulation of them in the United States. Animals also have very different anatomies than humans, and testing on them is not an effective way to determine the effect a product has on humans (PETA). Yet, multi-million dollar companies like Unilever and Johnson and Johnson still use them regularly (PETA).

Clearly, using conventional cosmetic products is tremendously risky, and downright frightening. Their safety is not evaluated, nor are many of them tested ethically or appropriately. Anything that needs to be tested for acute toxicity or irritancy of the skin is not something that ought to be on our bodies anyway. Many ingredients slip under the weak FDA radar, and even “natural” and “organic” products cannot be trusted. Fortunately, there are safe, practical, and less costly alternatives.

Alike many other types of medicine, appropriate skin care products are found in the produce isle and nature. Homemade cosmetic products can be made from simple ingredients found in most homes and back yards, and can be very effective. There are also thousands of plants that maintain skin health very effectively, and do not harm our bodies.

In addition to making remedies, however, it is more important to evaluate one’s lifestyle. One’s environment, diet, and exercise habits are pivotal to the health of the skin (Neal’s Yard Remedies). One cannot expect to yield good results from any skin treatment if they eat sugary and fattening foods every day, drink contaminated water, or are consistently exposed to chemicals (Neal’s Yard Remedies). Neglecting lifestyle is not only critical for the skin, but for the entire body.

After addressing lifestyle, the next step finding remedies specific to your skin’s needs, and faithfully using them every morning and night. Some common skin types,

which have different needs, are dry, oily, normal, problem, sensitive, mature, and combinations of these. Remedies for the skin vary dramatically between skin types, however, everyone's skin is different and experimentation with remedies, and finding the ideal proportions for your skin is recommended. This paper will focus on remedies for skin on the face, primarily. Many of these remedies, however, can be extended to other areas of skin.

Washing one's face every day and night is essential for these remedies to work. Deb Carpenter begins her book *The Natural Beauty Kit* with an exemplary morning and night ritual: In the morning, rinse your face with warm water. Then, fill a bowl with cool water and splash your face with it twelve times, or put a few ice cubes in the bowl and submerge your head in it four times. This closes your pores and wakes up your skin. Gently pat dry your face, and apply a splasher (which I will soon explain). Then apply a moisturizer.

At night, lightly pat oil, cold cream, castile soap, or cleansing lotion to cleanse the skin. Let it sit for one minute, and fill a bowl with cool water and splash the face twelve times. Then apply splasher and moisturizer. When caring for the face, always pull your hair back. Also, be very gentle while scrubbing and patting the skin dry. Never use anything that inflames or irritates your skin. Do not forget about your neck, and moisturize it as well. Most importantly, follow your routine faithfully! Long-term use always yields the best results (Carpenter).

A splasher is essentially an infusion of herbs and water that is left to dry on the face. To make an infusion, pour about a cup of boiling water on to one tablespoon of dried herbs, or two tablespoons of fresh. Never make any herbal remedies in aluminum

containers. Let the water cool before using. Splashers can also be stored in the refrigerator for up to four days (Carpenter).

Facial steams are another way to utilize herbs in facial skin health. Using a steam is very beneficial for all skin types. It cleans skin thoroughly, increases blood flow to the surface, and moisturizes. Steams are not for people with asthma, or those that have trouble breathing. Using various herbs in steams increases their viability and yields different effects. Tasting and smelling this herb in a tea before one uses it in a steam is critical, in order to assess your sensitivity to the herb (Carpenter).

First, pull your hair back and clean your face thoroughly. Fill a bowl half full with boiling water. If you would like to use herbs, put them into the bowl as well. Keep your face about a foot from the bowl, and cover your head and the bowl with a large towel. Relax there for five to ten minutes. After, fill a bowl with lukewarm water and splash your face twelve times. Gently dry it, and apply a facial mask (which I will soon explain), or a moisturizer.

Many different herbs can be used in splashers and steams. Medicinal herbs can also be infused into moisturizers, lotions, and numerous other cosmetic remedies. They yield a spectrum of different results, so you may want to experiment to find the ones that aid your unique skin type. For example, oily skin may be complemented with yarrow. This herb contains flavonoids, which increases circulation and heals wounds (Keville). It also contains tannis, which is anti-inflammatory. Yarrow is also an astringent, which gives it its forceful drying effect (Carpenter).

Sage is another herb one can use. It is also an astringent, but I do not find it as forcefully drying as yarrow. It can, however, reduce perspiration to half of its normal

rate. Sage is also antiseptic and antibacterial, making it a powerful medicine (Keville). Not only does this make sage effective in treating acne, blemishes, and other traits of problem skin, but also colds, flus, hot flashes, tonsillitis, and much more (Keville). Sage can also reduce the size of pores when used over time (Carpenter). Thus, sage may be the perfect herb for oily, problem skin.

Another option may be elder flower. Elder is an astringent that soothes and tightens the skin. It also can lighten the skin slightly (Carpenter). The ursolic acid in elder has anti-inflammatory effects, and can be used to reduce swelling of the skin, a sore throat, and even psoriasis. It can also be used to treat burns and cuts (Keville). Elder's astringent and anti-inflammatory properties make it very effective in treating oily and problem skin. It has also been found to clear black heads (Neal's Yard Remedies).

Lavender is another treatment for oily, problem skin. Lavender has been used for cosmetics since the Romans named it lavare, which means "to wash" (Keville). While lavender stimulates the skin, it is also a very calming herb that can treat nervousness and muscle spasms. It also has antibacterial and antifungal properties. It can treat skin injuries, like burns and wounds (Neal's Yard Remedies). It also has anti-inflammatory properties, which reduce the itching of bug bites (Keville). Lavender is a strong antiseptic, which gives it the ability to treat acne. It can also help those with sensitive and delicate skin regain their skin's strength (Neal's Yard Remedies).

A person with more mature skin that is dry or inflamed may want to look to roses. Rosehips and petals soften and moisturize the skin (Carpenter). Not only can they aid inflamed skin, but also itchy and sunburned skin. Rose hip oil can even treat scar tissue. Roses also help the skin retain moisture, and can serve as a wonderful toner (Neal's Yard

Remedies). This enables roses to treat dry skin. Roses are also antiseptic, making them even more useful for cosmetic treatments (Keville).

Here are some recipes from Deb Carpenter's *Nature's Beauty Kit* that can be used in your morning and nightly ritual:

Oatmeal Cleansing Lotion

Ingredients: oatmeal, water

1. Fill a jar half full with uncooked oatmeal.
2. Fill it to the top with water.
3. Let it sit for 24 hours, and shake it regularly.
4. Strain water into another jar and compost the oatmeal.
5. Apply at night with a cotton ball (see nightly ritual).

Herbal Cleansing Lotion

Ingredients: water, fennel seeds, dried elder flowers, honey, buttermilk

1. Boil ½ cup of water.
2. Add one teaspoon of crushed fennel seeds and 1 teaspoon dried elder flowers.
3. Let it steep for 15 minutes.
4. Strain this infusion into a jar.
5. Blend 1 tablespoon of cooled infusion with 1 tablespoon of honey, and 3 tablespoons of buttermilk (remaining infusion can be used as a splash).
6. Store in refrigerator.
7. Apply it to face, and remove with a washcloth soaked in warm water.

8. Rinse thoroughly, and apply splash and moisturizer.

Night Cream/Moisturizer

Ingredients: egg, oils (almond, sunflower, corn, or coconut), lemon juice, cider vinegar, additives (optional)

1. Blend one egg with ¼ cup almond oil (or sesame oil as a substitute) using an electric mixer until thoroughly combined.
2. Slowly add ¼ cup sunflower oil (or safflower oil) with mixer still running.
3. Slowly add 1 tablespoon lemon juice and ½ tablespoon of apple cider vinegar while running mixer. Herbs can be infused with the vinegar.
4. When blended, slowly add ¼ cup of corn oil (or avocado oil) and ¼ cup of coconut oil, while running mixer.
5. Mix until thick. If it does not thicken, refrigerate and mix again.
6. Add perfumes or ½ tablespoon of water based herbal infusions if desired.
7. Refrigerate and discard after 2 weeks.

*Feel free to experiment with oils
and see what feels best!*

Banana Facial Mask for Dry Skin

Ingredients: Bananas, sunflower oil

1. Mash half a banana.
2. Add 2 tablespoons of sunflower oil.
3. Mash or blend well.
4. Apply mixture to clean skin.
5. Leave for 20 minutes.
6. Rinse with warm water, and then cool.
7. Gently pat dry.

Herbal Facial Mask for Oily Skin

Ingredients: dried yarrow, water, honey, yogurt

1. Pour boiling water over 1 tablespoon of dried yarrow.
2. Let steep for 10 minutes.
3. Strain and let cool.
4. Mix 1 tablespoon of honey with one tablespoon of yogurt.

5. Add 1 teaspoon of cooled yarrow infusion. The rest can be used as a splasher.
6. Stir.
7. Spread mask on face and neck.
8. Rinse after 15 minutes with warm water, and then cool.
9. Apply moisturizer.

Honey Facial Mask for Blemishes

Ingredients: honey (which has strong drawing power)

1. Apply warm honey to face.
2. Leave for 15 minutes.
3. Rinse thoroughly with warm water, and then cool.
4. Pat dry.
5. Apply splasher, and then moisturizer.

Tomato Facial Mask to Remove Blackheads

Ingredients: thin slice of tomato

1. Rub affected areas with thin slice of tomato
2. Rinse and pat dry.
3. Apply moisturizer.

I have tried every one of these recipes, and can vouch for their effectiveness. They have converted me into a firm believer that conventional cosmetics are not only detrimental to the health of our bodies and our society, but also a waste of money. Everyone can reject the unethical practices of cosmetic companies and make their own remedies, personalized for their unique skin. Quite frankly, the mighty healing power of medicinal herbs, drawing power of warm honey, penetrable soothing effect of oils, and strengths of other ingredients listed above will always triumph over synthetic chemicals, artificial preservatives, and “organic” cosmetics. For more information and recipes, check out these resources.

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