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BEAUTY

Nature's Bounty: The Best Ingredients for Your Skin

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Mother nature has beautiful skin! Once upon a time ingredients from nature were the only source for beauty and health aides. With chemistry labs came extreme manipulations and toxic formulas. Today green chemical formulations have had major advances with society's realization that going back to nature's bounty is healthier. The

mainstream demand for natural and organic products is booming.

What ingredients are skin care experts talking about today? Effective and popular ingredients you will find in skin care products are fruits, vegetables, plant stem cells, peptides, antioxidants, seaweed, probiotics, growth factors, retinols, phyto-hormones, brighteners, herbs, oils, and natural preservatives and fragrances. Edible skin care is a hot topic but very expensive if you start eating your night cream! Check out *Dr. Alkaitis* and *Intelligent Nutrients* products to learn more about “skin food.”

In the beauty industry, natural ingredients were once considered less effective on the skin. Mark Wuttke, natural and organic personal-care expert and *Primavera* consultant, agrees that the reason naturals have gotten a bad rap is because the ingredients have not been processed correctly. Processing differences are like fast food versus fine dining, says Wuttke. Natural personal-care products are powerful and concentrated, rivaling the synthetic ingredient benefits without the potential side effects of suspect chemicals.

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Natural and organic products retain their full concentration and powerful benefits when the ingredients are harvested, extracted, and processed carefully. Biodynamically grown, sustainably harvested, and wild crafted are all methods that preserve ingredient's bioactivity and effectiveness. The sourcing and manufacturing process needs to maintain the plants' original life force (living enzymes, oils), without over-processing with heat or cutting with additives. For example, there is no substitute for pure essential oils and the effects on the skin, olfactory system, and spirit.

Third-party certification helps consumers navigate numerous choices. Independent evidence-based testing and clinical trials verify the effectiveness of personal care products. Avoid undesirable ingredients such as phthalates, petrochemicals 1-4 dioxane, formaldehyde, and synthetic dyes.

Product lines such as *Ilike* are combining herbalism and aromatherapy to come up with multi purpose products that address the health of the skin, the psyche, and the body. Ayurvedic and other exotic global treatments are bringing even more diverse ingredients to skin-care repertoires. Unique products to check out include *Elemental Herbology*, *Shira*, and *Jurlique*. Stay tuned for *Part 2: Natural Skin Care For All Ages* that discusses specific ingredients for your individual needs and age group.

Fruits are Powerful For radiant, glowing skin, look for fruits and berries in your products. Blueberries, grapes, cranberries, pomegranates, acai berries, wild plum, and cherries are among the powerful antioxidants full of vitamins, minerals, bioflavonoids, and polyphenols. Papaya is an excellent exfoliator.

Eat Your Vegetables Feed your skin nutritious veggies. Wild carrot (contains carotene and vitamin A) is nourishing and a popular choice in masks and moisturizers. Pumpkin is very effective for exfoliating and masking. Lemon (with citric acid) is an astringent, skin bleach, and preservative. These ingredients can be stimulating, so use in moderation. And no, these do not substitute for eating your broccoli –

wishful thinking!

Silky Oils Argan, grapeseed, manuka, coconut, squalane, and olive oils are top oils that contain various antioxidants and vitamins. Omega 3 and 6, shea butter (vitamins), and avocado are other effective ingredients in today's products that are highly moisturizing. Quality oils today are necessary for healthy skin and do not clog follicles. Choose oils by your skin type.

Plant Therapy There are hundreds of herbs and essential oils that have numerous benefits on skin conditions. Among the more interesting choices today are rosehip oil and rosemary. Other fascinating ingredients are two spices used primarily in masks: paprika (stimulates circulation) and turmeric (contains curcumin, which is healing and has antibacterial properties). Bamboo is another exotic ingredient known to contain minerals and support cell strength that is used for exfoliating and as a humectant. Plantago from the plantain fruit is a natural antiseptic and is soothing and cooling.

Plant Stem Cells For skin firmness and youthfulness, plant stem cells are showing amazing results as these have the highest concentrations of antioxidants and support cell growth and repair. Pure botanical stem cells such as grape and edelweiss are two of the most powerful stem cells.

Antioxidants protect cells and reduce free radical damage. In addition to berries, green tea, and cocoa, vitamins A, B, C, and E are strong antioxidants. Resveratrol is an excellent antioxidant found in seeds and skins of grapes (OPC's).

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Shelley Lotz has over 25 years of experience in the spa/wellness/beauty industry. She is an esthetician, educator, business owner, and the author of the new book, "Green Spas and Salons: How to Make Your Business Truly Sustainable." A major contributing author of the textbook "Milady's Standard Esthetics Fundamentals," Shelley also started an institute of aesthetics and has taught green building. Learn more about her at greenspasandsalons.com.