

Skin and Hair Care *Au Naturel*

by Susan J. Dorey

1 INTRODUCTION

The first thing I want you to know is that there is *no better way* to care for your skin than with natural substances. It is easy to do and inexpensive. There are lots of techniques and products to choose from. More importantly, your skin can be its best. This book presents what is most likely for you a new world of options—options that are natural, options which you can select and combine to suit your needs from day to day, options which leave you in control.

The key features of a natural program of skin care are:

- ✓ adaptable—tailor your program to keep up with the changes in your skin and its environment
- ✓ natural—use products made simply from completely natural ingredients
- ✓ effective—your skin will look great!

The focus of this book is the needs of your skin and hair and how those needs can be met with natural substances. It is a unique combination of information about vegetable oils, drawn from research on nutrition; herbs, drawn from “herbals” (encyclopedia of herbs and their uses); and essential oils, drawn from research in aromatherapy—all specific to skin and hair care. In some instances I write only about skin care; that is because my best success has been with skin care.

This book is organized to be an easily accessible reference. The material is in four main sections: the *physiology* of the skin and hair, which is the basis of an effective system of care; *methods* of natural skin and hair care; *natural ingredients*; and *natural cosmetics* (topical products for skin and/or hair care intended to promote attractiveness and alter the appearance). Details of *synthetic ingredients* are incorporated for commonly found ingredients to illustrate their inappropriateness, but my list is far from inclusive. In addition there are two sections which address *sources and costs*, and *how to get started* following a program of natural skin and hair care. Lastly, there is a *bibliography* which lists the most useful and/or interesting of the books I read; they are listed in no particular order, but are numbered to correspond with the superscripts which I use throughout the text for reference.

Be advised that some topics, especially the conditions of psoriasis, eczema, and dermatitis, are not addressed thoroughly. On the other hand, acne, by which I had been plagued for over thirty years, is. Should you have any skin conditions that persist in the face of focused attention and care with natural cosmetics, I recommend that you do additional research on those particular conditions.

While the focus of this book is the external application of beneficial substances, please remember that diet, exercise, and rest are also important to healthy skin and hair. In fact, the biggest determinant of your skin condition is your diet; if you fail to nourish your body with pure food and water, your skin and hair will be the worse for it. Additionally, “skin problems are often the surface manifestation of a deeper condition, such as a build-up of toxins in the blood, hormonal imbalance or nervous and emotional difficulties.”²⁰ In these cases, the underlying problems must be resolved before the skin can appear its best, and the guidance of a medical practitioner may be useful, if not necessary.

WHY USE NATURAL COSMETICS?

Natural cosmetics are desirable both for what they are and for what they are not. There are natural substances that work in sync with the body to effect integrated functional improvements. In contrast, synthetic cosmetic ingredients are problematic.

There are some good reasons to avoid synthetic ingredients. Before the end of World War II when the cosmetics industry began using synthetic ingredients, 80% of all medicines and cosmetics were obtained from roots, barks, and leaves. Now we are surrounded by synthetic substances. Synthetic chemicals are rampant in our clothes and home furnishings, household cleaners, and cosmetics. Neither manufacturers nor regulatory agencies can determine that a particular chemical or combination of chemicals is good for us; instead they try to quantify how much we can be exposed to before too much damage is done. Daily we learn of more dangers associated with synthetic chemicals, dangers to ourselves, our children, and to the ecological balance of the planet. Many synthetic ingredients are toxic, some are carcinogenic, some are allergenic, few are truly beneficial to skin and hair in the long run.

Have you every noticed that your skin feels soft and smooth after applying a commercial body lotion or cream? And that a few hours later your skin is drier than ever? Have you considered that the body lotion/moisturizer causes dryness in the long run? Commercial products are made of water and refined fatty oils. The water can only temporarily plump the skin; after it evaporates or is carried away by the blood, dryness and wrinkles reappear. Refined fatty oils, because they have been stripped of their natural antioxidants, create free radicals which in turn cause permanent damage to connective tissues. This damage accelerates skin aging. Some natural ingredients act against the formation of free radicals and provide protection against them.

Have you noticed that your hair is rough, dry, and tangled after using a commercial shampoo? And that you need a conditioner just to get your hair back to the smoothness it had before you shampooed? Have you considered that the commercial shampoo causes roughness and dryness?

There are three problems associated with the use of natural substances in mass-produced cosmetics. First, they are typically embedded within synthetic chemicals, which blocks their effectiveness. Second, the quality of the natural substances is likely to be inferior to what is available to you for your homemade cosmetics. Third, commercial cosmetic manufacturers would have you believe that the synthetic ingredients they use are just as good as the more costly natural ingredients that they replace, but this is not true. All in all, the characteristics of mass-production and its associated warehousing and distribution systems preclude commercial cosmetics from being natural by any stretch of the imagination.

The good news is that there are lots of natural ingredients which can be used in a program of skin and hair care. To consider these to be alternatives to synthetic ingredients is an irony, when for most of human existence they have been the only choice.

JUST WHAT IS NATURAL?

As “natural” has become big business, its meaning on labels and in advertising has become empty. Accordingly, my definition is quite strict—and precise. Natural substances can be animal, plant, or mineral and have been harvested or extracted. You can recognize them by common and/or Latin species names*.

I do not consider substances that are derived, refined, manufactured, or processed with heat (over 120° F) in any way to be natural. “Derived from” is a phrase found on many commercial product labels; it always refers to a chemical and in most cases the chemical does not occur naturally in the source material—it is a synthetic chemical that is manufactured. Every synthetic chemical is made from some raw material, and it is manufactured in a factory using industrial chemistry. Molecules are split and combined at will to make industrial products. This is man at work, not nature.

* For example, Lavender and *Lavandula officianalis*.

AUTHENTIC, PURE, AND FRESH

A wonderful advantage of do-it-yourself cosmetics is that they can be authentic, pure, and fresh—why would you want to use anything else? *Authentic* means genuine, real. *Pure* means free from adulterants, impurities, and contaminants. *Fresh* means recently made, produced, or harvested; not stale, not rancid, and not preserved by heat or chemicals.

DRUGS AND COSMETICS

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has a federally-mandated charter to regulate commercial food, drugs, cosmetics, and packaging and labeling. Substances intended to affect the structure or function of the body are considered drugs and thus subject to more stringent regulations than are cosmetics. Consequently, commercial cosmetic companies are careful in their product claims and labeling to describe their products as non-drugs. One example of this is their use of chemical names for vitamins.

You need not limit yourself and your skin by the attitudes and regulatory environment of the commercial cosmetic companies. Your skin needs far more than moisture. It needs a large number of biological chemicals, such as proteins, fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals, to maintain or improve health and function. Wonderfully, there are many natural substances which can benefit the structure and function of skin. You can feed your skin with those substances both internally and externally.

MAKING LEMONADE

I sure love the saying “when life brings you lemons, make lemonade.” It’s a great model. It lets you acknowledge that bad things happen while encouraging you to turn them to your advantage.

I thank acne for all I have learned about and accomplished with natural skin care. Life-long acne (from 16 to 48) was the impetus for my journey of discovery. I turned to natural skin care as a last resort. I had tried most cosmetic products sold in grocery stores, drug stores, and department stores. I supported dermatologists until I could no longer pretend that my skin was improving (that took about ten years, I am embarrassed to say). My acne continued and, in my forties, got worse.

Desperation overstates my state of mind, but not by much. I was determined that there had to be a way to improve my complexion. I became convinced that finding beneficial cosmetics was not a matter of trying yet another new brand, but of discovering a different archetype.

My research began in the winter of 1992–93, and continues to this day (I am always looking for new information). I began at the local library, but it was of no help. The only books it had were the ones that claimed that inexpensive cosmetics were just as good as the expensive ones or that repeated the party line of the dermatologists and women’s magazines—the advice that had failed me.

Slowly, limited by time and money, I bought books in health foods stores and from mail-order suppliers of natural ingredients. I read, made notes, located and purchased natural ingredients, and made my own cosmetics. I learned first-hand what benefited my skin through trial and error. There were few errors. Most things helped, some more than others.

My skin today is proof of the sweetness of this particular lemonade. It is free of acne. It is neither oily nor dry. Its texture is fine and smooth, its color glowing. An avid sunbather in my twenties and thirties, I do have some lines near my eyes, but nothing typical of people my age.

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You too can benefit from skin and hair care *au naturel*. Read a little, experiment a little. You'll be pleased with the results.