

### 3 NATURAL PROGRAMS OF SKIN AND HAIR CARE

It's easy to care for your skin and hair using natural substances. There are a variety of treatments to choose from and an even greater variety of natural cosmetics. Use this section to devise programs that work for you.

You may want to have several programs which you alternate. For instance, a streamlined program for daily skin care and “the works” program for once or twice a week. You can always supplement these with special treatments for unusual conditions.

An effective program is one based on the condition of your skin or hair and its physiology. This means using cosmetic products selected for each treatment whose ingredients meet the following criteria:

- 1) they are natural;
- 2) they are known to be beneficial to skin/hair;
- 3) their properties and/or effects are appropriate to the particular treatment and the condition of your skin/hair; and
- 4) they are not allergenic or carcinogenic.

Each program has two phases—cleansing and nourishing. Each phase has one or more treatments. For the most part cosmetic products are targeted for either phase, but not both. As a rule one product alone is not sufficient.

<p>Skin Care Program..... 1</p> <p><i>Cleansing Treatments</i>.....2</p> <p>    Remove makeup (preparation) .....2</p> <p>    Soften pores (preparation) .....2</p> <p>    Cleanse .....2</p> <p>    Exfoliate.....2</p> <p>    Steam.....2</p> <p>    Mask.....3</p> <p>    Tone, tighten pores (follow-up).....3</p> <p>    Treating breakouts.....3</p> <p><i>Nourishing Treatments</i> .....3</p> <p>    Facial massage.....3</p> <p>    Nourish .....3</p> <p>    Hydrate.....4</p> <p>Customizing a Skin Care Program .....4</p> <p>Hair Care Program.....5</p> <p>    <i>Cleansing Treatments</i>.....5</p>	<p>    Shampoo.....5</p> <p>    Toning rinse (follow-up).....5</p> <p><i>Nourishing Treatments</i> .....5</p> <p>    Condition .....5</p> <p><i>Special Treatments</i>.....6</p> <p>    A vinegar tonic to reduce oiliness.....6</p> <p>    Hot oil to treat dryness, dandruff, oiliness, or hair damage.....6</p> <p>    Tonic for dandruff, oiliness, itching.....6</p> <p>    Daily conditioning essential oil.....6</p> <p>Acne Care.....7</p> <p>Dermatitis Care .....8</p> <p>Eczema Care.....8</p> <p>Responding to Major Skin Problems .....8</p>
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#### SKIN CARE PROGRAM

The objective of a skin care program is to normalize the skin. Whereas the emphasis of this book is facial skin, all body skin can benefit from these treatments.

What is cleansing? Substances are deposited on the skin surface and pores from the air, from your fingers (either deliberately or inadvertently), and from the lower layers of the skin itself. Smoke, dust, bacteria, mold, fungus, and other air pollutants can be deposited on the skin from the air. Makeup, dirt, and bacteria can be deposited on the skin by your fingers. Sebum and perspiration are secreted from glands in the dermis and make their way to the surface. Cleansing is the removal of all these substances from the skin surface and pores, while leaving a little of the sebum to continue to protect the skin. Some of this soil is soluble in water and some is soluble in oil, thus the most effective cleanser utilizes both water and oil.

Exfoliation is the removal of the top layer of the epidermis. It is generally accomplished with chemicals and/or abrasion. Exfoliation is an important aspect of cleansing. Some people believe that regular, even daily, exfoliation prompts faster cell production in the lowest level of the epidermis, which improves the appearance of the skin. Exfoliation done at home should be a gentle process. If you feel you need a deeper, more aggressive treatment, leave that to a dermatologist or plastic surgeon.

During cleansing, the temperature of the water used is an important factor in the results. Begin with water as warm-to-hot as is comfortable, then decrease the temperature as you progress through the steps, and end with water as cold as comfortable. Using water that is warmer than your skin tolerates can leave it taught and dry. Should this happen to you, use cooler water. In general, avoid heat when your skin is dry and irritated.

Always start by washing your hands. Use a clean washcloth and face towel, and keep them reserved for this use only. I've come to prefer washcloths that are thick yet supple and have one velour side and one rough side. The thickness holds the temperature of the water longer, the velour side is nice for compresses, and the rough surface can provide some exfoliation during washing and/or rinsing.

### *Cleansing Treatments*

#### **Remove makeup (preparation)**

Wipe skin with cotton pad soaked with cleansing oil or rub cleansing oil onto skin with fingers, and wipe off with non-scratchy tissue or cloth.

#### **Soften pores (preparation)**

*This enables a deeper cleansing, softens dead surface cells which aids their subsequent removal, stimulates the sebaceous glands, stimulates blood circulation, and facilitates absorption of subsequent products.*

Compress: Use a thick washcloth heated in hot water and wrung dry, press to the face for one full minute. Whenever the cloth cools during that time re-immers in hot water, wring dry, and reapply. The temperature can be as hot as you are comfortable with; it can vary from lukewarm for dry, sensitive skin to hot for young oily skin.

#### **Cleanse**

*Enables the skin to maintain its health; a clean skin is best able to benefit from the application of nourishing cosmetics.*

Apply cleanser to damp cotton pad(s), washcloth, or fingertips; if liquid, pour cleanser into palm of the hand and slide hands together to distribute the cleanser. Rub gently into skin on neck and face including eyelids and lashes. Rinse with warm-to-lukewarm water and washcloth, scrubbing gently with the cloth. Do a final rinse by splashing water on your face with your hands; keep your eyes open so they can be flushed. Pat skin dry. NOTE: When there is no water in the cleanser, the rinse acts to remove the water-soluble soil.

#### **Exfoliate**

*Prompts faster cell production in the lowest level of the epidermis, which improves the appearance of the skin.*

Wet face with warm water. Apply exfoliating scrub with fingertips to face and neck (best to avoid eye area), gently rub skin using circular motions for about one minute, rinse well with lukewarm water, pat dry. A rough washcloth can have an abrasive effect which may be sufficient in some conditions. Exfoliating ingredients can be combined with a basic cleanser.

#### **Steam**

*There are many benefits: 1) It softens surface cells so they can be sloughed off during a facial massage; 2) it opens follicles so they can be easily cleaned; 3) the steam penetrates into the skin and helps pores to eliminate toxins; 4) lines are softened and the skin responds well to the toner and nourisher; 5) the steam increases blood circulation; 6) the herbal essences are carried into the skin and improve cellular metabolism.*

Place fresh herbs, dried herbs, or essential oils in boiling water in a bowl\* or even the sink. Bend over the steaming water. Cover your head with a towel so that no steam escapes. Close your eyes. Keep your face as close as is comfortable to the water. Steam for two or more minutes, or until steam stops. Rinse with warm water, pat dry. CAUTION: steam treatments are not recommended when skin is blotchy or has broken veins.

### Mask

*It produces a noticeably tightening effect on the skin; it has sufficient absorbing power to achieve a cleansing effect while not irritating the skin; it can draw impurities from the pores. It can also soften the skin.*

First, put a rich nourishing oil on the lips and on the thin skin around the eyes; this directly benefits those areas and protects them from any stray mask†. Spread mask on face and neck, avoiding eye area and lips (the back of a teaspoon works well for spreading, like icing a cake!). Optionally, soak two cotton balls in a toner or witch hazel, place one over each closed eye. Relax for 10-20 minutes depending on the mask and your skin. Remove mask with lukewarm water.

### Tone, tighten pores (follow-up)

*A toner clears the skin of soap film, cellular debris, and oil traces; it softens and emulsifies deposits and blackheads in the follicles; it can temporarily make large pores appear smaller. It also stimulates the local blood supply, which brings moisture to the epidermis.*

Wet cotton pad(s) with toner, wipe neck and face in upward and outward movements; use new pad when existing one gets soiled. Alternatively, compresses of essential oils can be used to tighten the pores. Ice-cold water is an excellent toner and stimulant.

### Treating breakouts

Natural cleansers can not only remove soil and impurities from the surface of the skin, they can—depending on their formulation—pull toxins from the inner layers of the skin. This may result in breakouts. Don't be discouraged. Rely on facial steam and clay masks several times a week to complete the toxin removal, so your skin will clear quickly. If you are using an aggressively-formulated cleanser, consider using a milder one for awhile.

### *Nourishing Treatments*

### Facial massage

*Improves circulation, tones facial muscles, invigorates the skin, and assists in the absorption of nutrients.*

Apply herbal oil to fingertips; oil can be a single vegetable oil (like jojoba oil) or a mixture of several oils, with or without essential oils. Use a gentle, firm touch; keep fingertips on skin at all times. Movements can be based on acupressure. The oil can be left on the skin, depending on the formula and the skin's dryness, or removed with a toner.

### Nourish

*Supports the skin's structure and function. Can be used to remedy certain conditions (like inflammation and oil imbalance) and/or to revitalize the skin (such as by stimulation and rejuvenation). Can also be used to establish a protective film.*

There are several ways to do this. You can use one product by itself or layer two or more; you can use the same approach every time or rotate several. Spread product on face and neck with fingertips in light, upward strokes; lightly massage it in. Blot off excess. When layering several products, apply the next before the last one is dry. Lately I have been using three layers: first I spray on a floral water, then pat on aloe gel, and lastly spread on a facial oil. When using a skin oil, remove excess shine by blotting with a tissue or cloth after 15 minutes.

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\* I use two nesting pyrex bowls (from a kitchen set). I put the herbs in the smaller bowl and add the water, then pour water into the larger bowl so that level is about up to the level in the smaller bowl. This arrangement extends the steam by keeping the herb water hot longer.

† I forego this step when using clay that I know to be skin softening, and I apply the clay mask on lips and around eyes.

You may want to introduce a mega dose of nutrients or merely ensure that the regular dose is fully absorbed. In that case you can improve the absorption of a facial oil (especially one with essential oils) by using a hot compress five minutes after applying the oil. The compress can be a wrung-dry washcloth. You can apply a second layer of facial oil after the compress.

**Hydrate**

*This gives a boost of water and other nutrients whenever you do it.*

Spray pure water or a floral water, with or without herbs, essential oils, and vitamins, on the skin (with eyes closed). Use a fine mist pump spray instead of an aerosol (if you can). This can be done throughout the day when skin is especially dry or at risk by extreme environmental conditions (like airplane trips).

CUSTOMIZING A SKIN CARE PROGRAM

Because a natural skin care program is based on products whose ingredients are specific to the needs of your skin, the first step in customizing your own program is to **determine the conditions of your skin**. *The great benefit of a customized program is the ability to respond immediately to variations in the condition of your skin.*

The second step is to **identify the effects which will best benefit your skin** during cleansing and nourishment. The following table can serve as a guide. Effects are listed as either primary (1), or secondary (2). If your skin has a combination of conditions, you will have to combine effects to formulate a program best for you.

<i>Skin</i>	<i>Cleanse</i>	<i>Tone</i>	<i>Nourish</i>
Oily	(1) Cleansing	(1) Tonic, stimulant (2) Healing	(1) Humectant, oil regulating (2) Calmative
Dry	(1) Cleansing (2) Stimulant	(1) Stimulant 2) Tonic	(1) Humectant, oil regulating (2) Emollient, stimulant
Balanced	(1) Cleansing (2) Stimulant, detoxifier	(1) Tonic (2) Stimulant, healing	(1) Humectant
Young	(1) Cleansing	(1) Tonic, stimulant (2) Healing	(1) Humectant
Mature, wrinkled	(1) Cleansing, detoxifier (2) Stimulant	(1) Tonic, stimulant (2) Healing	(1) Cell regenerative, humectant (2) Emollient, stimulant, astringent
Acne	(1) Cleansing, detoxifier (2) Depurative, antiseptic	(1) Tonic, stimulant (2) Antiseptic, healing, calmative	(1) Antibiotic, bactericide (2) Healing, oil regulating
Sensitive	(1) Cleansing, detoxifier (2) Calmative	(1) Tonic, stimulant (2) Calmative, healing	(1) Humectant, calmative (2) Healing

Remember, of all the actions you want to effect on your skin, do not expect to accomplish them in one treatment or with one product.

The third step in customizing a skin care program is to **identify ingredients which are appropriate** to your skin's condition and which deliver the desired effects. Ingredients and their properties are detailed in chapter 4.

The last step in customizing a skin care program is to **establish a schedule** for the various treatments. For instance, if you are wearing makeup, it should always be removed before any other step. Cleansing should be done twice a day, after rising and before retiring. Softening the pores should be done each time you cleanse. Exfoliation is needed more frequently for acne-prone skin than any other; it could be done as often as 3 times a week or as little as once every two weeks. Steaming and masking may be done as often as 3 times a week for acne-prone skin or once a week for other skin; it is especially helpful to precede a mask with a facial steam. Facial massage may be done as often as once a week or once a month. Nourishing should be done after every cleansing. Hydration may be done frequently when you are in a dry environment or not at all when you are in a humid environment.

## HAIR CARE PROGRAM

Except for damage from environmental causes (such as aggressive synthetic hair care products, tints, hot rollers, sun, and some medications), the condition of your hair is based on the condition of your scalp. A hair care program, to be successful, must address both the scalp and the hair.

The objective of a hair care program is to establish and maintain a full, lustrous, healthy head of hair.

**Conditioning:** When the cuticle is roughened, it may be smoothed by correcting its pH and/or closing the scales of the cuticle (achieved by cold water). Minor damage can be repaired by substances which rebuild the keratin and disulfide bonds (cystine). Major damage cannot be repaired, but it is desirable to apply a conditioner that coats the hair shaft with a thin film that smoothes and fills in the rough surface.

When only the ends of the hair are damaged, it can be beneficial to apply a light herbal conditioner to the hair shafts and a more intensive one to the ends.

### *Cleansing Treatments*

#### **Shampoo**

*Cleanses the scalp and hair: remove dirt, hair scales, and excess oil.*

Focus on the scalp more than the hair. Wet hair thoroughly with warm to medium-hot water, softening the pores. Apply shampoo to the scalp, rub in vigorously with fingerpads (not nails), giving your scalp a massage in the process. Also rub shampoo into the skin of the outer ear. Squeeze shampoo through the hair shafts. Rinse thoroughly with warm water. Repeat as necessary.

#### **Toning rinse (follow-up)**

*Analogous to a facial toner, this removes soap film, calcium residue, cellular debris, and oil traces. It also tightens pores, restores the acid balance of the scalp, stimulates hair growth, and can treat dandruff.*

Pour rinse over hair, massage well into the hair and scalp. Wash out quickly. (Depending on the ingredients, some rinses can be left on 1-2 minutes.) A final rinse of **cold** water (refreshing when you get used to it) tightens both the pores of the scalp and the scaly layers of the hair shaft; it may add shine.

### *Nourishing Treatments*

#### **Condition**

*A conditioner can repair hair damage, encourage hair growth, even reverse hair loss.*

Depending on the condition of your hair and the nature of the conditioner, apply conditioner to either the full length of the hair or only to the ends. Some formulas are rubbed into the scalp. Herbal conditioners (water extracts of herbs) need to be applied as many times as necessary to ensure the hair is thoroughly saturated. I like to

use a bowl large enough to put my head into, put the conditioner into the bowl, lean over the bowl submerging my hair and scalp in it, and swish my hair in the bowl for 1-2 minutes. I also scoop up some liquid and pour it over the hair and scalp that is not submerged.

### *Special Treatments*

#### **A vinegar tonic to reduce oiliness**

Apply apple cider vinegar with a saturated cotton ball to the scalp 20 minutes (if possible) before shampooing.

#### **Hot oil to treat dryness, dandruff, oiliness, or hair damage**

Prepare a blend of one or more vegetable oils, heat to body temperature, massage through dry hair and scalp. Cover to retain warmth, leave on for 15-120 minutes, depending on condition being treated and the identity of the vegetable oils. Shampoo out. CAUTION: Some oils do not wash out well if you wet your hair before shampooing.\*

#### **Tonic for dandruff, oiliness, itching**

Massage tonic into scalp and hair and leave in.

#### **Daily conditioning essential oil**

*Adds luster and gloss without oiliness, reduces snarls and tangles, stimulates growth.*

Put 1-2 drops on your palm, brush your palm against your hairbrush, and then brush your hair completely from roots to ends.

Conditioning herbs can be combined with toning ones to make a rinse that may be enough for hair that is not severely damaged.

After rinsing and/or conditioning the hair, gently towel dry it until it no longer drips. If you have any concern about hair loss or damage, follow Jeanne Rose's advice: "NO, NO, NO, a thousand times NO. NEVER, NEVER put a brush or comb to wet hair. Wet hair is just like a stretched out rubber band and trying to comb it will damage and break it. So ... allow it to dry, pull your fingers gently through your hair until it is completely dry. As it dries, its natural elasticity returns...."

You can minimize snarling of your hair by the way you handle it during shampoo, rinse, condition, and towel dry. Avoid massaging or rubbing your hair into a snarl. Long hair needs to fall or hang straight down, and not be allowed to pool at the bottom of a shampoo basin (or, in my case, the kitchen sink). Some hairs will naturally fall out during a scalp massage (don't worry—they are going to fall out any way); these can get entangled in the other hairs and make for a big snarl if you are not careful. Should that happen remain calm and be patient—a snarl is easier to disentangle when the hair is dry than when it is wet.

If the profusion of hair curling devices is any evidence, many people want curly hair. You can maximize the curl inherent in your own hair, and maybe surprise yourself in the process, by adhering to the following steps:

1. After shampooing, rinsing, and conditioning with natural cosmetics only, rinse thoroughly. Don't use conditioners which leave a thick coating on your hair.
2. Squeeze the water from your hair with your hands. Towel dry gently until the hair no longer drips.
3. Do not comb, brush, or apply any styling product.
4. Bend over at the waist, let hair pool in the palm of your hand and make a loose fist with the hair bunched inside. Either sit in the warm sun so it can dry your hair or using a blow dryer at low-to-medium setting

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\* Several books specify hot oil treatments. I have had success only with olive oil; the others I tried were very difficult to shampoo out—in fact, I had to resort to the well-known synthetic detergent sodium lauryl sulfate to remove one experiment. I've come to prefer herbal conditioners.

- direct warm air into your fist. Release that bunch of hair and grasp a new one, repeating the partial drying of handfuls. Continue until hair is at least half dry. (Some hairdressers call this technique the “scrunch”.)
5. Finger comb hair gently, with attention to not pulling out any curl.
  6. Stand up straight. Repeat the bunching and drying of hair until it is dry. Comb hair only when completely dry.
  7. Apply hair spray if desired, especially if hair tends to be frizzy or flyaway. Or, if the latter, apply a little rosemary essential oil to a natural bristle grooming brush and brush your hair.

It is possible to style your hair with a brush and hair dryer that minimizes the damage of working with wet hair. Use your fingers to comb your hair as you dry it with a blow dryer. When the hair is almost dry, switch to a brush.

Let’s talk about grooming your hair with a comb and brush. First, be aware that a *grooming* brush is likely to be different from a *styling* brush; you will probably have at least one of each. Brush bristles should have rounded tips, and be somewhat flexible. This is naturally come by in boar bristle brushes; cheap nylon brushes are apt to be stiff and have rough edges. Plastic combs often have rough edges between the teeth; these edges tear the hair. In addition the plastic causes static electricity. Wood combs with smooth edges are best. Be sure to keep your brushes and combs clean. Optimally, they should be swished in soapy water (they can be damaged by soaking) and rinsed every time you shampoo your hair.

Daily brushing stimulates the scalp, distributes sebum from the scalp throughout the length of the hair, and helps remove soil (especially dust and lint). For long hair, this brushing is best accomplished bent over at the waist and with strokes that begin at the scalp and continue to the ends of the hair. Following the motion of the brush with the palm of your hand against the hair eliminates any static electricity that may be present. This brushing is especially valuable for long hair and hair that is not washed daily (not that daily washing is desirable).

## ACNE CARE

The goals are to eliminate the sticking of sebum in the ducts and follicles, eliminate the bacterial infections, and remove the sebum blocks. Basically, skin with acne should be cared for the same as any skin, paying special attention to the choice of cosmetic ingredients.

Acne is well-treated by herbal steam and mask. If done up to 3 times a week, it will free the sebaceous ducts and follicles of impurities and obviate the squeezing of pores. Steam the face as long as the steam lasts. Rinse face with warm water and dry it. Mix clay with the herbal infusion (from the steam) to a thick but not stiff cream. Spread mask over face thickly (1/8–1/4”) and wait for 30 minutes. Rinse with lukewarm water and dry.

Additionally, pimples can be treated by direct application of either of several essential oils: tea tree, peppermint, niaouli. You can also apply a bruised but fresh calendula petal, a dab of castor oil, or a dab of honey; these can be repeated occasionally over a 24 hour period. I have had success with the castor oil treatment.

Be aware that cosmetics can only treat the symptoms, but not the cause; on the other hand, natural and appropriate cosmetics can minimize the aggravation of acne that is possible with synthetic cosmetics and comedogenic ingredients. Proper nutrition is the real, long-term solution. It can remove the cause of acne, which is defective sebum and/or hypercornification. Realize that “long-term” means at least six months, there are no quick cures.

Proper nutrition as acne treatment must focus on dietary fats and sugars. Avoid all damaged fats; this includes fats that are hydrogenated, refined, or overheated (because frying usually damages fats by overheating them, avoid fried foods\*). Do make a point to eat unrefined vegetable oils that contain the essential fatty acids, like pumpkin and

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\* The safest oil for frying is coconut oil because it is not damaged by the level of heat achieved during sautéing or popping corn.

flax oil. See section 4 for a discussion of fatty oils. Avoid sugars—especially table sugar, corn syrup, maple syrup, and honey, but also refined grains like white wheat flour. Raw vegetables can also be helpful.

#### DERMATITIS CARE

Treatment should encompass diet: eat whole foods with lots of essential fatty acids, gamma linolenic acid (GLA), and vitamin E. Drink an herbal tea made from herbs that are known to cleanse the liver and kidneys and enhance the immune system, such as licorice root, sarsaparilla, burdock, and dandelion. Apply a skin oil formulated to alleviate inflammation. Pay attention to which substances may be allergenic and avoid them.

Consult *The Way of Herbs* and *Herbs for Health and Healing*.

#### ECZEMA CARE

The main herbal treatment of eczema is internal. Infusions or decoctions are drunk (as teas) to nourish and cool the blood and skin, help the nervous system, and support the adrenal system. External treatments can be used simultaneously. Floral water has been very effective in some cases. Dry skin can be oiled with essential oils of chamomile or lavender in vegetable oils high in essential fatty oils; oil high in GLA (e.g., evening primrose oil), vitamin E oil\*, or jojoba oil can also help.

#### RESPONDING TO MAJOR SKIN PROBLEMS

Good blood circulation and the absence of toxins are key to healthy skin. Should you experience a major problem with your skin you may want to follow one or more of the following steps to improve the quality and circulation of your blood, which will in turn improve the quality of your skin.

1. Get lots of sleep.
2. Fast for three days with diluted vegetable juice, diluted fruit juice, nutritional herb teas, green tea, and water. It may be dangerous to undertake a fast without consulting a physician, especially if your health is not robust, so use good judgment. A fast, even a short fast, can give your body an opportunity to clean out toxins and rest from over stimulation.
3. Modify your diet. See chapter 6.
4. Exercise regularly and vigorously enough to sweat.
5. Walk 30–60 minutes daily.
6. Get a therapeutic massage, especially one that supports lymphatic drainage.
7. Invert your body — put your feet over your head by laying on a slant board — for 20 minutes every day. Your feet should be at least 15 inches higher than your head.
8. Steam your face daily with lavender and chamomile.
9. Spritz your face several times a day with the herbal water left from steaming.
10. Mask your face several times a week with essential oils.

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\* See the section on Vitamins for a discussion of vitamin E oil.



11. Apply aloe gel twice daily.
12. If your skin is very dry, apply shea butter or jojoba oil twice daily.
13. Avoid essential oils. (After several years of applying EOs daily, I developed skin reddening and swelling in the eye area—contact dermatitis—which plagued me for over a year until I quit using the EOs. It happens to some people, us sensitive ones.)