



SEEING RED ABOUT SEEING "GREEN"

The **Importance** of Using **Skin Products** That Are Really "Green"

Your **skin** is your body's **largest organ**, and what you put on it works its way into your **bloodstream**. Shouldn't these products be really "green" and not just deceptively labelled that way?

BY INA LUTIN, RN

We've finally gotten smart about avoiding pesticides, food additives, and artificial ingredients. So why do we slather our bodies with skin creams and lotions that contain more chemicals than a science lab?!

Healthy skin regulates body temperature, holds moisture and nutrients in, keeps bacteria out, and serves as a giant sensor, relaying information about everything around us.

Skin is the body's largest organ. All products—natural or synthetic—that are applied to our skin are absorbed into our bloodstream, where our bodies struggle to discard them. It is believed that the assortment of various toxins in our skin-care/cosmetic products might be responsible for the enormous increase of cancer rates in developed countries. An industry survey of 2,300 people showed that the average adult uses nine personal-care products each day, with 126 unique chemical ingredients. More than a quarter of all women and one of every 100 men use at least 15 products daily. Typical detoxification processes like mud wraps, saunas, and steam rooms are effective

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because they help remove unwanted substances through the body's largest organ—the skin.

As more and more people become outspoken advocates of a greener environment and healthier bodies, more and more skin-care companies have jumped on the "natural green" bandwagon. In many cases, though, they jumped on in name only.

Slapping the word "pure" or "natural" on a product is easy to do; backing the claim up is a bit more difficult. Just as you are now in the habit of reading the ingredients and nutritional panels on the food you buy, you owe it to yourself to read the ingredients in skin creams and cosmetics. You will be surprised to see how many "pure" products are nothing but pure chemicals and toxins.

Natural skin-care products have been around for centuries; the ancient Egyptians and Chinese used fruits, vegetables, herbs, and even ground minerals to make beauty products. One benefit of natural cosmetics is their rich hypoallergenic properties and the decreased number of chemicals. This means fewer breakouts, blemishes, and rashes, and less excessive dryness. These products are gentler on the skin and often good for people with sensitive skin. Also, using natural skin-care products reduces the number of chemicals and toxins in our bodies. Always check to see if you are allergic to one of the ingredients before trying any product. It is best to test for sensitivity with a small amount of product on the inner part of your arm.

In my skin-care practice, I utilize several different product lines. The one I like best and use the most is

botanically based, without mineral oil. The line uses no fragrances, harmful chemicals, or dyes, is hypoallergenic, pH correct, and dermatologist-tested. These products are never tested on animals and contain no animal by-products.

Always check to see if your products contain mineral oil. It may be listed as petrolatum. Mineral oil has molecules that are too big to penetrate into the cellular level of the skin. Mineral oil is a thick, occlusive substance that doesn't allow your skin to absorb the product's good nutrients. As your skin cells stretch to try to allow the heavy mineral oil in, your pores lose their elasticity, resulting in enlarged pores. Besides the sun, this is the second leading cause of aging of the skin.

Natural skin-care products may be more expensive than synthetic, chemically saturated products, but the benefits more than make up for the cost. All personal care products including shampoo, conditioner, moisturizers, makeup, and body wash may contain ingredients that have been shown to be harmful. We use these products every day, and the number of harmful ingredients may be high. We all need to educate ourselves and start reading ingredient lists of the products we are using. Look for organic ingredients in the top third of the ingredient list, since the top third contains 90-95% of the product. Natural emollients to look for are plant-based oils such as jojoba, avocado, rose hip, and shea, cocoa, and jojoba butters.

Taking the time to learn about what you are putting on your skin and into your body is crucial. Aren't you and your health worth it?

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