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A PLACE IN THE SUN

PURE SPA AT PELICAN GRAND BEACH RESORT
(FT. LAUDERDALE, FL)

[skin deep]

Slick Pick

Find out why facial oils are essential for keeping skin looking healthy, shiny, and radiant.

"Oils provide the skin with much-needed nutrients, essential fatty acids, and lubrication and serve as a protective barrier for the skin."

MOST PEOPLE ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE benefits of facial moisturizers, serums, cleansers, and scrubs. However, consumers are quickly realizing that facial oils, which have been used for centuries to improve skin conditions, are the secret ingredient to healthy skin. "People are hungry for ancient beauty remedies, and facial oils have been used in cultures all over the world for millennia," says Kiera Nachman, founder and owner of Sundara Holistic. "Conscious consumers who are interested in holistic nutrition, fitness, and overall wellness are also paying closer attention to the ingredients in their skincare. Facial oils tend to have all-natural ingredients and don't need any chemicals to enhance the perfection of natural plant extracts."

Full Benefits

As people age, wrinkles appear deeper, because natural moisture barriers break down, and the skin dries out. While replenishing moisture exclusively with hydrating creams may initially show some improvement, because they help hold in moisture, in time, the wax base may prevent oils from delivering nutrients to the skin, according to Gloria Ah Sam, spa director at **Spa Ojai** at Ojai Valley Inn & Spa (CA). "Oils are lipophilic and absorbed quickly into the skin," she says. "A healthy lipid layer helps prevent dehydration by preventing water loss, plumping skin, and creating a radiant glow."

According to Elizabeth Murchison, director of education at Guinot Paris, facial oils regenerate, nourish, rebalance, and invigorate the skin. They also offer free-radical protection and hydration to the skin and provide a protective barrier, making them especially beneficial for use during winter months and in cold weather. "Because essential oil molecules are so small, they are able to penetrate

through the skin to reach the bloodstream and lymphatic system—certain essential oils are even known to improve the blood and lymphatic flow," says Geraldine Howard, chairman and cofounder of Aromatherapy Associates. "They also have a positive effect on the skin, penetrating into the deeper layers to encourage the process of cellular renewal, enhance blood circulation, and help problems such as acne, eczema, and aging skin."

Facial oils can also be used on the body to help diminish the appearance of stretch marks and scars. Many skin problems, such as early aging or sagging, are due to a lack of fats both in the diet and on the skin, according to Nachman, so healthy fats in facial oils or in foods boost collagen production in strong, healthy skin. "When you give these beautiful ingredients to your skin, it breathes a sigh of relief and releases toxins and impurities," she says. "Oils provide the skin with much-needed nutrients, essential fatty acids, and lubrication and serve as a protective barrier for the skin."

Oil and Water

The difference between facial oils and facial serums is somewhat confusing to many spa-goers, so it's important for estheticians to educate clients on what sets them apart. One of the main differences

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between the two is that serums tend to be more processed and have more chemicals, while facial oils are mostly plant based. Also, while both facial oils and serums have a high content of active ingredients, serums are usually not hydrating enough to be used alone and require an application of a moisturizer afterward, says Boldjarre Koroncay, president of Eminence Organic Skin Care. Facial oils, on the other hand, have a two-in-one effect. They contain the same results-oriented ingredients as serums and are deeply hydrating because of the delivery system of the oil. "For example, a vitamin C serum can irritate the skin due to the natural acidity of vitamin C," he says. "However, vitamin C facial oil will create the same amazing antioxidant effect without any irritation due to the hydrating and less-acidic nature of the oil."

Also, facial serums allow water-based actives, such as hyaluronic acid, to penetrate the skin quickly and easily, while facial oils penetrate the skin with oil-based actives, such as plant-seed oils, which are known to stimulate collagen production and improve elasticity. However, according to Howard, facial oils and serums are best used together as part of a daily skincare routine to deliver optimal beauty results. "At Aromatherapy Associates, we recommend using one of our facial serums each morning to plump and revive, followed by a face oil to nourish the skin, and finally a moisturizer which acts as a barrier, protecting the skin from the harsh effects of daily environmental stresses," she says.

Debunk the Myths

There are misconceptions about facial oils that many people still believe to be true. Some of these misconceptions, such as facial oils clog pores and make skin greasy, exist because mineral oil previously was used as a base ingredient. However, skincare companies today are dedicated to developing high-quality facial oils that absorb perfectly into the skin, leaving it hydrated and supple, says Koroncay. "Because the sizes of oil molecules are similar to our own molecular composition, our body easily recognizes the product and absorbs the oil instantly," he says. "This results in great targeted benefits for all skin types."

Even though facial oils are becoming mainstream, it is important for you and your staff to continue to educate consumers and spa guests who

have false perceptions. For instance, clients with oily skin who believe they should avoid using any facial oils should be informed that the opposite can be true. They should actually use oils to help their skin. "Sometimes, guests do not understand that they should use oil to treat oil, but with the right formulation of essential oils and ingredients, they can balance the skin," says Penny Kriel, spa director at the **Salamander Spa** at Salamander Resort & Spa (Middleburg, VA). "There are specific oils that are formulated to treat oily skin and help clarify and purify congestion while also balancing pH. Combination and congested skin can still be dehydrated, and therefore, the oil can help with hydration. There are also facial oils that are used as great cleansers to deeply clean the skin while leaving it nourished and hydrated."

Marta O'Connor, corporate educator at Yon-Ka Paris, notes that it's also important that clients realize that skin needs its natural oils, and by stripping the oil away with alcohol-based products, it will actually produce more oil to compensate. "That brings imbalances and breakouts," she says.

Healing Touch

According to Howard, the best facial oils contain a highly effective combination of base vegetable oils mixed with the correct balance of essential oils to suit an individual's skin. Pre- and post-facial treatments, estheticians should perform an in-depth consultation to ensure the right oils are used on clients. "Climate, lifestyle, and genetics all play a role in how our skin acts and reacts," says Sharon Ogawa, director of spa at **Spa Grande** at the Grand Wailea, A Waldorf Astoria Resort (HI). "Our estheticians assess the needs of their guests, utilize the products so clients can feel the texture and see the difference, and then reinforce this with education and tips on when and how to use the oils for maximum effect."

They can also advise clients on how best to apply facial oils. During treatments, facial oil should be applied after the cleansing and toning steps. At home, it should also be applied after cleansing and toning, but it's also best in the evening when the skin is at rest. "You can mix your oil with your moisturizer or apply it over it," says O'Connor.

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"Today's facial oils can keep the face... hydrated, nourished, and looking radiant."

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Howard recommends using a triple layering system to maximize penetration of all active ingredients. "Facial serums act to plump and revive, while face oils nourish the skin, and moisturizers act as a barrier to lock in moisture and protect the skin," she says. "However if, after applying facial oil, the skin still feels oily five-to-ten minutes later, it means you have applied too much. One to two pumps of oil over the driest areas of the face should be sufficient."

According to Nachman, a simple and ancient Ayurvedic technique for applying oil to the face involves what she calls an Ayurvedic facelift. "The whole premise is to start applying oil from the bottom of the face, up," she says. "Start at the chin, and slowly drag your fingers up, applying the oil in an upwards motion so that you are going against gravity. With these light upward strokes, you are also releasing subtle tension underneath the skin, and lightly activating pressure points on the face, which assists the oils to heal at the cellular level."

Striking Oil

According to Robert Vance, spa director at Mii amo (Sedona, AZ), it's important to allow guests to see and feel the products and remind them that today's facial oils are not related to their grandmother's age-old practice of applying a coat of Vaseline or baby oil to skin. "If guests are taking care of their skin daily, being conscious of their diet, and keeping their

hands away from their face, facial oils can make a huge difference in their skin," he says.

As with most spa retail products, offering sampling products on display for clients to test out is a highly effective way to make a sale. "Seeing is believing," says Koroncay. "A skeptical consumer can be quickly overcome when they experience the proper application of a facial oil and witness the immediate hydrating and balancing effects firsthand." He also recommends demonstrating the diversity of the product by mixing a few drops in with the client's favorite moisturizer and applying it to their face so they can see firsthand the versatility the facial oil offers to enhance their existing skincare regimen. "By diminishing those preconceived notions of what oil does to the skin, they will ultimately feel more comfortable inserting facial oil into their daily routine," says Vance.

Today's facial oils can help keep the face, as well as the entire body, hydrated, nourished, and looking radiant. "Skin that lacks nourishment can become dry and age quickly, so regular use of facial oils is a wonderful tip for customers looking to aid skin regeneration," says Howard. What's more, the aromas of essential oils found in face oils can also have a dynamic effect on transforming one's mood and wellbeing. Says Howard, "The sense of smell is the most primitive of our senses and is linked to the deepest part of our brain, which governs basic instincts, memories, and emotions."—Nicole Altavilla

OIL THRILL

Here, some of our experts weigh in on some of the most popular and effective oils used in skincare today.—N.A.



Argan oil, which contains fatty acids like linoleic, linolenic, oleic, palmitic, and stearic, is used as a moisturizing oil against acne.



Corn oil, which is composed mainly of polyunsaturated fatty acids and low on saturated fat, is rich in omega-6 acid and vitamin E and is vital for the maintenance of healthy skin. It also helps protect the skin from free radicals and soothes skin irritation.



Jojoba oil, which is beneficial to all skin types, penetrates deeply into the skin, bringing moisture to all layers of the skin, according to Nachman.



Lavender oil relaxes the mind and body and helps reduce anxiety and stress.



Rosehip seed oil is high in essential fatty acids omega-3 and omega-6 and also contains provitamin A. It is used to treat various skin conditions like dermatitis and eczema, and it is also effective in boosting circulation and keeping complexions looking youthful and radiant.



Soybean oil, which is an antioxidant-rich oil, helps treat sun-damaged skin, keeps skin healthy, and protects it from free radicals.



Sunflower oil is high in vitamins E and K and helps protect skin from free radicals.



Ylang Ylang oil helps to relax and awaken the body.



Coconut oil contains a high concentration of fatty acids, as well as vitamins E and K and iron. According to O'Connor, it is one of the best oils to prevent dry and flaky skin and helps to prevent skin problems, including dermatitis, eczema, or psoriasis.

ingredient to watch: indian gentian

While there are a couple of ways to take being called thin skinned, those dealing with the literal connotation may have some relief in sight. Indian gentian, a traditional Ayurvedic herb, has long been reputed for its medicinal properties. "It is an incredibly detoxifying plant," says Kiera Nachman, founder of Sundara Holistic. "It is commonly used in India to treat immune problems, such as colds, fevers, and flus." According to her, Indian gentian hasn't been traditionally used in topical skincare products, but it does benefit the skin when consumed as a tonic or tea. Because of its anti-inflammatory and pitta-pacifying qualities, gentian is helpful for treating skin conditions, such as acne, inflammation, and redness.

The ingredient, also known as *swertia chirata* extract, is getting a second look in topical form, as new research reveals its skin-saving benefits. According to Robert P. Manzo, president and CEO of Skinprint, the ingredient has a significant clinical effect at high doses, which is why it's being featured in the company's new Skintellect Micro-Gel Cream. "We have demonstrated that it accelerates keratinocyte proliferation and regenerates epidermal tissue rapidly for smooth, clear skin," says Manzo. "Epidermal thickness is also increased due to stimulation of keratinocyte growth factor." This is certainly good news for those spa-goers looking to plump up their skin. Says Manzo, "Long story short, at the right dose and bioavailability, this active can make skin much smoother and thicker, which can yield a young-looking, better contoured facial surface." For Skinprint products: www.skinprint.com. For Sundara Holistic products: www.sundaraholistic.com.—H.M.

