

getting personal

Tips for buying the best natural personal care products for you and your family

Fruit-scented lotions, electric blue shampoos, colorfully striped toothpastes. They may look and smell appealing, but you'd do well to be as choosy about what you put on the outside of your body as you are about the food, water, and supplements that go into it. And while it's important to know which ingredients to look for in those products you slather onto your skin and lather into your hair every day, it's just as important to know which ingredients to avoid. Here, we provide advice for both, along with a handful of buying tips and some naturally effective product recommendations to help you get started.

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hair

Sodium lauryl sulfate and sodium laureth sulfate, two foaming agents that are widely used in mainstream shampoos and conditioners, have been linked to follicle damage, hair loss, skin and eye irritation, and allergic reactions. Other problematic chemicals in most mass-market shampoos and conditioners are parabens—sometimes listed as methylparaben, propylparaben, isoparaben, or butylparaben—which are added as preservatives to ward off mold and mildew. These chemicals may accumulate in the bloodstream where they can “mimic” hormones, such as estrogen, and disrupt endocrine function. The good news is that many alternatives to

sodium lauryl sulfate, sodium laureth sulfate, and parabens are available. Mild foaming agents derived naturally from coconut oil cleanse just as thoroughly without stripping your hair and scalp of their natural oils. Citrus seed extract, tea tree and other essential oils, as well as vitamins A, C, and E are natural preservatives that enhance rather than endanger your health. Look for hair care products that contain wheat germ, jojoba oil, coconut oil, keratin, and vitamins.

product picks: GARDENIA HYDRATING HAIR CONDITIONER and PLUMERIA REPLENISHING HAIR WASH from ALBA BOTANICA; EARTH SCIENCE OLIVE & AVOCADO DEEP CONDITIONING MASQUE



product picks: JASON POWERSMILE PLUS COQ10 TOOTH GEL; TOM'S OF MAINE NATURAL ANTICAVITY FLUORIDE MOUTH-WASH IN SPEARMINT

dental

It's startling that more teeth are lost due to gum disease than tooth decay. What can you do to prevent this problem? A conscientious oral hygiene program includes brushing your teeth with a soft toothbrush for at least two minutes at least twice a day, flossing at least once a day, rinsing with a mouthwash each time you brush, and seeing your dentist every six months for a checkup and

cleaning. Studies show that brushing with toothpaste containing antioxidant-rich CoQ10 applies approximately 1,000 times the amount of CoQ10 normally present in gum tissue. Toothpastes and mouthwashes containing aloe vera soothe the pain and accelerate the healing of inflamed gum tissue.

hands and nails

Be sure to treat your hands with the same care you give your face. Hand and nail care products should contain the same nurturing ingredients as skin care products, including vitamins, antioxidants, and natural emollients. Next time you buy hand lotion or cream, buy four bottles. Place one by your bathroom sink, one by the kitchen sink, one on your nightstand and one in your office drawer. That way there's no excuse not to rub lotion or cream into your hands at least a couple of times a day and after

washing your hands. And don't forget to use sunscreen when going outdoors. UV rays can damage the thin skin on the tops of your hands just as easily as the skin on your face.

product picks: HOME HEALTH GOJI BERRY HAND & BODY LOTION; AUBREY ORGANICS ULTIMATE MOIST HAND & BODY LOTION IN PASSIONFLOWER



men's shaving and skin care

Drugstore shaving creams and aftershave with artificial fragrance are full of chemicals that aggravate skin during shaving. Start by choosing a natural facial cleanser with a base of coconut oil. On tough beard days, work a granular facial scrub made from almond meal, jojoba beads, or oatmeal flakes into the skin; scrubs lift the hair shafts and exfoliate dead skin that blocks the hair follicles, which helps to prevent ingrown hairs. Avoid shaving foams from aerosol cans. They are

propelled by chemicals that ultimately dry the skin. Look for a shaving cream in a tube. Protect freshly shaved skin by splashing on a skin toner that contains witch hazel rather than alcohol, which is too drying to skin. The toner may also contain pure essential oils of lavender or tea tree oil, both natural antiseptics. Finally, hydrate your skin with a multitasking moisturizer that reduces redness, smooths wrinkles, and protects against sun damage.



product picks: AUBREY ORGANICS MEN'S STOCK NORTH WOODS FACE SCRUB and SHAVE CREAM; ZIA MEN TRIPLE PROTECTION + LOTION SPF 15

gentle skin care

If you have problem skin, it is especially important to choose products with nonirritating ingredients. Look for fat-soluble antioxidants, like DMAE, vitamin C ester, and alpha-lipoic acid. And because the delicate eye area is often the first place on your face to show signs of aging, a moisturizing eye cream is essential. For dark circles and puffiness, look for creams that contain vitamins C and K, and green tea.



product picks: EMERITA DARK CIRCLE EYE SERUM; ANNEMARIE BORLIND ZZ SENSITIVE CLEANSING MILK

lips

Lip balms and lipsticks can protect your lips while adding moisture, color, and shine. Most mass-market lipsticks, however, use artificial colors in their formulas, and are made from coal tar or are synthetically produced from petroleum products. Most natural cosmetics use pigments derived from beet powder, beta-carotene, iron oxides, grape skin extract, turmeric, and annatto, making them attractive, long lasting, and good for your lips. ♦



product picks: ALBA BOTANICA TERRAGLOSS SHIMMERING NATURAL COLOR; JASON LIPS BEE BETTER



deodorants

For products designed to keep you clean and fresh, conventional deodorants and antiperspirants are loaded with some pretty nasty ingredients. Most contain aluminum, parabens, and other harsh ingredients that have been linked to Alzheimer's disease, breast cancer, and more. Natural stick, spray, roll-on, and crystal salt deodorants, on the other hand, use mineral salts or potassium alum and astringents to control odor.

product picks: ALBA CLEAR ENZYME DEODORANT STICK; AVALON ORGANICS DEODORANT in ROSEMARY

Natural deodorants work by controlling bacterial growth with antibacterial herbs, such as tea tree oil, rosemary, lichen, sage, or lemongrass, then masking any remaining odor with pure essential oils. Most also contain baking soda and cornstarch to absorb moisture. And natural versions may contain healing ingredients such as calendula, chamomile, and arnica to calm and soothe the underarm area and prevent irritation.

sun care

Protecting your skin from exposure to the sun's harmful rays is one of the smartest things you can do. Not only do you have to worry about UVB rays, which cause sunburn, but you also need to be concerned about UVA rays, which cause wrinkles, dryness, sagging skin, hyperpigmentation, and premature aging. Keep in mind that a product's sun protection factor (SPF) indicates protection against UVB rays only. To protect against UVA rays, select a

sunscreen with micronized zinc oxide or titanium dioxide that absorb and reflect rays away from the surface of the skin. The label should read, "UVA/UVB protection."

product picks: ALL TERRAIN TERRASPORT SPF 30; CARIBBEAN SOLUTIONS SOL KID KARE SPF 25



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