

Chemical-free skincare

Naturopath **Toni Green** shows you how herbs can help you have fresher, healthier, younger-looking skin.

Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*)

This cooling, calming herb is particularly beneficial for reddened, dry and sensitive skin types. Chamomile balances sebum production, making it useful for conditions characterised by either over-oily or over-dry skin, including acne, eczema, dermatitis, and rashes. It is anti-inflammatory and anti-infective, so is excellent in creams for minor cuts and grazes, hives, bites, or sunburn. Beauty bonus: chamomile reduces under-eye puffiness and dark circles, and helps to heal rosacea and broken capillaries.

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

This emollient herb moisturises dry skin and repairs chafing or peeling, thanks to its naturally restorative and anti-ageing carotenoids. Exceptionally mild and soothing, it's safe enough to use on babies' skin. It is also antiseptic, antibacterial and antiviral, making it useful in healing salves. Topical applications of calendula have been shown to increase the speed of wound closure and formation of new skin; it is of particular benefit in preventing radiation burns in cancer patients, and for healing perineal tears post-childbirth.

To nourish sensitive skin, apply a nightly mix of 1 drop each of chamomile and rose essential oils in a teaspoon of almond oil.

Gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*)

Rich in organic compounds which strengthen skin, repair connective tissue, smooth out cellulite, and improve firmness and elasticity by boosting collagen production, and also to improve microcirculation to the skin's surface, this has exceptional wound-healing properties, and may be used topically for burns, psoriasis, acne, eczema, scars and stretch marks.

Green tea (*Camellia sinensis*)

This is excellent in healing acne: in one study, topical application of green tea resulted in a 70 percent reduction in oiliness after eight weeks, and also reduced the skin's inflammatory response to bacteria in the pores, which in turn reduced infection and pimples. Studies show that topical formulas containing green tea extract markedly reduce sun damage, by countering free radical action. Taken internally, green tea also has skin-beautifying benefits, with one study noting that a combination of a 10 percent green tea cream and a 300mg green tea supplement twice daily significantly improved skin elasticity.

D-I-Y with Toni:

Flower balm

Select one or a combination of the herbs described here and make a strong tea, using 1 tablespoon of fresh or dried herbs in one cup of boiling water. Steep for 20 minutes, strain, and smooth liquid onto face using a cottonwool ball. Leave for 15 minutes, then rinse off.



Ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*)

Ginseng firms skin from within by boosting production of collagen in the dermis (middle layer of skin). It contains essential oils, minerals and antioxidants which all positively affect skin cell metabolism in the epidermis (outer layer of skin), speeding the shedding of dead skin cells and the production of fresh, dewy ones. Research shows that ginseng is antibacterial and rebalances over-active oil glands, so it is also great for treating pimples and acne.

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