

A young woman with a white towel wrapped around her head is smiling broadly. She is holding two slices of cucumber, one near her eye and one near her mouth. The background is plain white.

The Top ⑤ Ingredients To Feed Your Skin

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Though chemical-based skin care is often associated with achieving rapid results such as reducing fine lines and wrinkles, increasing elasticity, and reducing discoloration, their use frequently includes uncomfortable side effects. Chemical actives like retinol, hydroquinone and hydroxy acids continue to grow in popularity in the skin care industry as treatments for various skin concerns; however, redness, peeling, and increased UV-ray sensitivity are frequently experienced with their use. So, how can your clients achieve added skin care benefits without the added side effects? The answer might be in their garden, refrigerator or kitchen cupboard! Nature offers a cornucopia of superfoods that provide topical benefits for multiple skin concerns, with little to no downtime or side effects. Here are five miraculous, skin-saving superfoods and how they work to treat the skin.

1. Blueberries

Blueberries are commonly referenced as a healthy skin ingredient because of their high concentration of potent antioxidants. These tasty treats draw their dark blue color from a pigment called anthocyanins, which also function as powerful antioxidants, working to slow the signs of aging, moderate inflammation and protect against sun damage. Anthocyanins also assist in protection from stress and pollution, as well as support collagen production. Blueberries have a high oxygen radical absorbance capacity (ORAC), and this measurement is used to evaluate the antioxidant levels of various foods. Due to blueberries' high ORAC score, their level of antioxidants has the ability to neutralize substantial levels of free radicals. Just as rust degrades and oxidizes metal, free radicals damage healthy skin cells and reduce the skin's radiant glow. Through neutralizing free radicals, antioxidants also contribute to maintaining hydration and reducing inflammation.

Internally, a diet high in blueberries can also improve heart health and circulation, which is a key step in achieving healthy skin.¹ A healthy heart and circulatory system pump blood throughout the body to deliver oxygen and key nutrients to cells and remove waste along the way. Our skin needs these nutrients and oxygen to heal and repair damage caused by environmental stressors. When incorporated into

Blueberries have a high concentration of antioxidants.

someone's diet, blueberries can provide the necessary tools needed to support the body's regeneration and repairing of damage. The nutrients found in blueberries also help with skin inflammation related to eczema and psoriasis.^{2,3} I recommend incorporating both the actual fruit, as well as blueberry-formulated skin care products into any routine to address issues such as redness, signs of aging, inflammation, dry skin and discoloration.

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2. Cucumbers

Cucumbers are a magical ingredient that work wonders both internally and topically. Cucumbers are 96% water, meaning that they're not only incredibly hydrating, but are also well suited for all skin types, especially sensitive, blemish-prone skin. When ingested, the high concentration of vitamin C, fiber and folic acid in cucumber support gut health by reducing inflammation.⁴ Cucumbers are also a natural diuretic, which helps the body get rid of excess fluid. They are also a good source of silica, which aids in the growth and maintenance of connective tissue in the body.

These benefits also extend topically. We all know the age-old trick of applying a few slices of cucumbers to tired eyes when they need a little TLC. Well, there is a reason that this go-to hack has been trusted for generations. The cooling and soothing properties of cucumber calm the skin and reduce puffiness around the eyes, as well as soothe swelling and irritation related to blemishes and sensitized skin. Cucumber juice is also incredibly nourishing and can be used as a toner to balance oiliness, and tighten and reduce pore size due to its mildly astringent properties. Cucumber juice can also be used to soothe sunburns or irritation, and its cooling and anti-inflammatory properties can ease redness, pain and even dryness.⁵



Cucumbers are 96% water, making them hydrating.

3. Bamboo

In addition to enjoying bamboo shoots in your favorite Asian, African and Latin American dishes, you may have started to notice bamboo in new and emerging skin care trends, and for good reason! Like the cucumber, the bamboo plant contains a high amount of natural silica, particularly in the leaves, and is packed with healing and regenerative ingredients like fiber, minerals and proteins that work wonders for the skin.⁶ As we age, our bodies begin to produce less silica naturally, which can cause the skin to sag and fine lines to appear. Incorporating silica-rich ingredients like bamboo can help achieve youthful, glowing skin for anyone concerned with collagen loss and premature aging, as the potent mixture of fiber, minerals and protein can address this need. Additionally, bamboo naturally contains amino acids, flavonoids, and antioxidants that can shield the skin from damage

caused by harmful UV rays, fighting the free radicals and inflammation triggered by UV rays that accelerate the skin's aging.

These inherent nutrients in bamboo also strengthen the skin's barrier, meaning bamboo is not only great for aging skin, but also for sensitive, dry and dehydrated skin. Clients dealing with sensitivity, dryness and dehydration often suffer from a damaged moisture barrier, and bamboo extract can help restore this barrier, and as a result, produce better hydrated, protected skin.

Bamboo extract and water also offer advanced hydration and skin plumping properties. Bamboo can help our skin create glycosaminoglycans (GAGs), which are large molecules that naturally exist on the dermis of the skin, and when at their optimal levels, prevent moisture loss.⁷ Incorporating this ingredient into your client's routine will offer long-lasting hydration and supple-looking skin. The vitamins and minerals naturally occurring in bamboo also provide soothing and calming benefits for the skin and can be used to treat skin conditions like eczema and psoriasis.^{2,3}

4. Algae

Though algae may not typically be thought of as a food, many species are indeed edible and consumed by various cultures around the globe. Known as the superfood of the sea, algae are also a superfood for your skin! From high nutrition content to ultra-hydration and antioxidant delivery, people are buzzing about the benefits of algae on the skin. Some of the most talked about and popular algae include blue-green, brown and red algae varieties. These marine flowers are found in every environment on the planet, including marine intertidal zones, hot springs, and even within ice and snow.⁸ Let's look at the different types of algae and how they benefit the skin.

Red Algae Extract. This dark red marine flower is rich in antioxidant pigments which help protect the skin from harmful environmental stressors. It also contains vitamins and minerals that improve the visible signs of aging.⁸

Brown Algae Extract. This algae has a high water-holding capacity and helps rehydrate parched skin to reveal firmer and more supple skin.⁸

Blue-green Algae Extract. This algae is a natural retinoid alternative, rich in amino acids, that reduces the visible signs of aging and provides high levels of antioxidants to protect the skin.⁸

Like land-based superfoods, blue-green and red algae are vibrant in color and contain antioxidant pigments that naturally protect the skin. These compounds boost the skin's defenses against a variety of environmental stressors like UV damage, dryness and irritation.⁸

Besides acting as antioxidant powerhouses, algae also contain high concentrations of nutrients and amino acids. The intense dose of nutrition and protein building blocks replenish the skin and deliver superior hydrating benefits.



Succulents help treat and heal dry skin.

can be seen when applied topically or enjoyed in smoothies, salads or in their raw form. These plants offer a host of skin rescuing benefits and are widely popular because they are safe to use on all skin types. Throughout Hungary, the stone crop plant is used as a signature beneficial ingredient and beloved natural scent source.

Succulents are terrific for treating and healing dry skin, as these plants retain large amounts of water in the dry environments where they grow. These plants offer deeply effective, yet lightweight hydration, so those with oily and acne-prone skin can feel confident using these ingredients without worry. Not only are succulents hydrating, but they also improve signs of aging by targeting hyperpigmentation and wrinkles. Succulents are a natural way of brightening hyperpigmentation in the skin by inhibiting the activity of tyrosinase, or the enzyme responsible for melanin production. When tyrosinase is overproduced, which can be triggered by UV exposure, injury, and hormonal fluctuations, hyperpigmentation occurs. Use of this botanical over time lowers excess tyrosinase production and minimizes the look of any discoloration, contributing to a more even-looking complexion. Succulents are also rich in alpha hydroxy acids and antioxidants like anthocyanins and quercetin, which neutralize free radicals that cause oxidative damage to the skin. Over time, oxidative damage contributes to premature aging in the skin, and by minimizing this potential damage through antioxidants, emergence of fine lines and wrinkles are delayed, helping maintain the skin's youthful appearance.

5. Succulent Plants

Succulent plants like aloe vera, stone crop and prickly pear have been used for centuries to treat various skin concerns, and the benefits of these plants

Nature's Bounty

In summary, nature offers a bountiful selection of botanical ingredients such as the five mentioned throughout this article, that improve the most common

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skin concerns, including dryness, aging, dehydration and inflammation related to sensitivity and acne. Rather than only utilizing chemically-rich skin care products, we have the opportunity to educate clients on the abundance and effectiveness of naturally occurring ingredients found in superfoods, all without side effects. The old phrase “you are what you eat”... and drink.... has never been more true. Healthy, radiant skin can easily be achieved by turning to skin care products formulated with these nutrient-dense superfoods and adding more of them to your clients’ daily diet. ✂

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