

12 *Natural Skin* **Brightening** **Ingredients**

By Shawna Rocha, Hale & Hush



Natural brightening ingredients have become very popular in the skin care world for estheticians and clients alike, and there are two reasons for this rising demand. More and more clients are looking for sustainable, natural and organic product options across all consumer goods. Secondly, hyperpigmented skin is a concern in every treatment room across the country. Clients request treatments to lighten any sort of hyperpigmentation.

Most often, clients turn to more aggressive and chemically laden products that promise instant results. While they're powerful enough to give you those results, they aren't without downsides and long-term effects. Some of them are very harmful to different skin types and skin conditions, and they can often exacerbate the very skin problems you are trying to tackle in the first place. For those clients with sensitive skin, these ingredients are not an option and cause sensitivities, redness and inflammation. For those with darker complexions, failing to be cautious of these more aggressive treatments can also cause the skin more hyperpigmentation. Fortunately, there are plenty of natural alternatives to choose from for lightening the skin.

1. Azelaic Acid

Azelaic acid is a natural skin lightening agent derived from wheat, rye and barley. This acid has antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties, and it helps to lighten the skin by inhibiting melanin production and suppressing the growth of melanin producing cells. It can help with skin blemishes and fade dark spots left behind by acne, sun damage or melasma. Azelaic acid also helps to treat rosacea, redness, skin irritations, acne and reduce inflammation.

2. Bearberry Extract

Bearberry extract is derived from the bearberry plant containing high concentrations of antioxidants and arbutin, a skin-lightening



compound. The arbutin found in bearberry is what gives this extract its skin lightening properties. Arbutin is a natural derivative of hydroquinone, providing similar effects without the risks or skin reactions. Bearberry extract reduces melanin synthesis by inhibiting tyrosinase. Bearberry is great at correcting dark spots, hyperpigmentation, scars and it contains sun protection filters, which can reduce the impact of sun exposure and help slow down the signs of aging.

3. Citrus Extract

Citrus extracts are derived from citrus fruits such as grapefruit, lemon, lime, pomelo and orange, and it is a source of vitamin P (bioflavonoids) and vitamin C (ascorbic acid). Vitamin C, the hero element, helps to neutralize free radicals, which can cause premature aging of the skin. It is a potent agent that helps to minimize skin damage, build collagen and elastin, reduce melanin production, as well as promote skin peeling and skin growth. Citric acid helps with the skin lightening mechanism by reducing the cohesion of the cells on the epidermal surface, helping to stimulate cell turnover and renewal.



4. Daisy Flower

Daisy flower extract contains tartaric and malic acids, making it a valuable ingredient with its lightening and exfoliating properties. Daisy flower extract contains a naturally occurring substance called L-arbutin that naturally lightens skin by modulating various pathways of melanin synthesis, including melanocyte and tyrosinase activity. Daisy flower extract also assists in firming the skin, has antiseptic properties and is effective in fighting wrinkles.

5. Kojic Acid

Kojic acid is derived from mushrooms and other fungi, and also arises as a by-product of the fermentation practice in various Asian food products, such as soy sauce and rice wine. Just like other skin lightening ingredients, kojic acid is a great exfoliator.

12 SKIN BRIGHTENING INGREDIENTS

Kojic acid lightening effects work by blocking tyrosine from forming and preventing melanin production. With its powerful antioxidants, it also helps counteract free radical damage and reduce future pigmentation. Kojic acid has anti-inflammatory and antifungal properties, protects from sun damage and reduces scarring.

6. Licorice Extract



Licorice extract is a lightener often used for the treatment of sun damage, age spots, melasma and other skin problems. Licorice extract also helps control excess oil and calms down puffiness and itching. Glabridin is the compound found in licorice root that lightens dark spots by inhibiting tyrosinase and stopping melanin production. Licorice root also produces liquiritin, which enhances lightening by dispersing melanin. Licorice extract also works to prevent new dark spots from forming and has anti-inflammatory properties.

7. Mulberry Extract

Mulberry extract contain retinoids, ascorbic acid, alpha-tocopherol and riboflavin, all of which are highly beneficial for brightening the skin. Mulberry extract is known for its natural skin brightening properties, and the ability to help fade away dark spots and pigmentation caused by aging and exposure to the sun. It lifts hyperpigmentation by blocking tyrosinase production and decreasing melanin. It also contains powerful antioxidants that can neutralize the harmful effects of environmental pollutants to minimize skin damage.

8. Niacinamide

Niacinamide, also known as vitamin B3, is one of the most effective skin care ingredients at visibly reducing dark spots and hyperpigmentation. Niacinamide is an effective skin lightening compound that works by inhibiting melanosome transfer from melanocytes to keratinocytes. Niacinamide can also reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, reduce pore size, minimize acne, decrease oil

production and even skin tone. The ingredient often works best when combined with other skin lightening treatments and antioxidants. In addition to its skin lightening benefits, niacinamide also boosts the skin's ceramide levels and is deeply hydrating.

9. Resveratrol

Resveratrol is a naturally occurring antioxidant that can be found in the skin of grapes, giant knotweed, peanuts, all berries and even dark chocolate. Resveratrol can act as a skin lightening agent that inhibits tyrosinase activity. It also fights photo-aging by inhibiting synthesis of melanin, making the skin less pigmented. It also possesses anti-inflammatory and wound healing properties, is antibacterial and can help reduce the severity of acne. Resveratrol has also been shown to prevent sun damage from both UVA and UVB radiation, helping prevent premature aging and maintain the skin's youthful appearance.

10. Saffron



Saffron is full of antioxidants, including vitamin C, and it has anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties. Saffron shows excellent tyrosinase inhibition activity for brightening the skin. Saffron also has the abilities to calm inflammation, increase cell turnover and can help wounds heal faster. As an antioxidant, it can protect against UV damage and pollutants that produce free radicals. Saffron helps skin recover from environmental stressors, is rich in minerals and contains two types of powerful carotenoids: crocin and crocetin. These carotenoids are believed to be effective in damage repair and ensuring overall cellular health. They help the skin recover from daily environmental oxidative damage, sun damage, and they are helpful in healing everything from photo-damage to loss of skin suppleness.

11. Turmeric

One of the biggest skin benefits that turmeric offers is its ability to lighten and brighten the skin. This is due to its curcumin content, an extremely

powerful antioxidant which is essential in neutralizing the effects of free radical damage to the skin. It can inhibit excess melanin production, therefore lifting hyperpigmentation and preventing the skin from further darkening. Turmeric also can help with lessening acne and psoriasis, reducing inflammation, calming skin rashes, balancing the skin, reducing sun damage and making the skin more supple.



12. Willow Bark

Willow bark extract is derived from the white willow tree and contains flavonoids, polyphenol and tannin compounds in high concentrations. Willow bark contains a compound called salicin that is known to be a potent skin lightening agent. This compound works by inhibiting the production of melanin. By reducing melanin, willow bark can effectively lighten the skin and remove unwanted pigmentation. The polyphenols

and flavonoids have powerful antioxidant properties that build up the skin's barrier against free radicals, external pollutants and environmental damage.

Bring on the Brightening

With all of these options, the hardest part in lightening the skin becomes deciding which one to pick. The exciting news is that there are plenty of natural options for lightening and brightening the skin.



Shawna Rocha is the owner of Awaken Day Spa in California and Washington. She loves helping clients with compromised and sensitive skin. Since becoming an esthetician, Rocha completed multiple advanced courses in Oncology Esthetics and Immuno-Esthetics, and she specialized in training in sensitive skin and holistic therapies. She holds several certifications, including one in NCEA and has become the director of education for Hale and Hush Skincare.

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