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PRACTICE PHILOSOPHY BOOKS ABOUT

Want Supple Skin? Strike With Oil

Melisse Gelula February 23



One of the best pieces of skin-care advice I ever got was also one of the most counterintuitive: Slick my skin with oils. Not just my body....my face. That is, if I wanted to age like Dorian Gray (or just protect my skin from losing its natural luster).

I took some convincing, so I understand why, when I say I'm now an oil-slathering convert, and use oils twice a day under my moisturizer, it often provokes a violent head-shaking reaction. But before you say, "No way, I will break out!" Check to see if you're not already using one. Your skin-care brand may have just called it a "serum" because you'd never buy it otherwise.

I get that my fanaticism flies in the face of what conservative dermatologists and Neutrogena commercials advise. But here's some of the reasoning that's made me an oil addict culled from dozens of interviews with chemists, facialists, aromatherapists, and formulators.

- The smaller oil molecule (I'm talking jojoba seed, grapeseed, rosehip seed, apricot kernel, black currant seed, and more) can penetrate into the skin and nourish it. Creams can't.
- The skin likes oil because it resembles its cell structure; so it lets it in.
- Oils help protect the skin from water loss and feed it hydrating, firming nutrients like essential fatty acids, gamma linoleic acid, and vitamin E that help boost elasticity.
- Using pure face oils spares you from chemical emulsifiers that many face creams and lotions need to keep the oils from separating with the water.

Facial oils often come in apothecary-style packaging

So how come we're so convinced that face time with oil will cause our skin to freak out?

It's likely most of us are still drinking the Clean & Clear Kool-aid. Maybe teenagers don't need the extra oils, but your adult skin does thanks to three dozen years on the planet + sun exposure + free radical damage + accumulation of cocktails.

Not convinced it's time to update your skin-care operating system? **What if we told you your skin won't break out?**

- Oil binds to oil, not water. (Ever made salad dressing?) So it makes scientific sense as a cleanser for shiny skin and makeup-wearers. That's the reason for the popularity of [Shu Uemura Cleansing Oils](#).
- Acne isn't caused by surface oil, but by a plumbing problem in the pore, say dermatologists. (Skin and oil produced in the follicles get stuck there. In balanced skin, it should slough and flush itself out.)
- Your skin likes balance. So over-washing it with detergents like sodium laureth sulfate (SLS) to get that tight, dry "clean" feeling just tells your skin to produce more oil.

So which skin-nourishing essential oils are high quality and not synthetic schlock? My wheat grass might be your poison ivy, but I've tried all these to good effect. In fact, I'm using several of these right now. —
Melisse Gelula

[Susan Ciminelli Sensitive Skin Formula](#) with Cypress, Basil, and Petitgrain, \$110, www.susanciminelli.com

[She Essential Beauty Night Serum](#), \$60, www.sheessentialbeauty.com

In Fiore Complexe de Fleur, \$140, www.infiore.net

[Pangea Organics Complexion Balancing Oil](#), \$50, www.pangeaorganics.com