

Natural Skin Care



Adapted from **Organic Natural Living**

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Natural Skin Care ... What does "natural" mean?

As the number of people who are concerned about toxins in our environment grows, more and more **skin care** companies are jumping on the "**natural**" and "**organic**" anti-aging skin care product bandwagon.

But what does "**natural**" and "**organic**" mean when we see them on a mainstream manufacturers skin care product label?

- How do we really know if the skin cream product is really natural?
- How do we really know if herbal skin care products are safe and non-toxic?
- What are the best natural alternatives to synthetic and mostly toxic chemicals?

Natural skin care - is it really any better for us?

Our skin is the largest eliminatory organ in the body. It is a two-way membrane. Toxins are eliminated through the skin via perspiration and absorbed through the skin into the body's circulation system, through hair follicles and sebaceous glands, but not through the sweat glands. One square inch of skin contains approximately 65 hairs, 100 sebaceous glands and 650 sweat glands. Every square inch of your skin is like a thousand open mouths, absorbing into the body most of what is put on it.

What skin care products are truly natural and proactive?

Skin care manufacturers are not supposed to claim that their products penetrate the skin. If they did, the products would then be labelled as "drugs" and would be governed by much stricter regulations. However, it is now recognised that the skin does absorb many ingredients in skin care preparations. This is both good and bad. Good, because it means our skin can be nourished from the outside with some wonderful ingredients. Bad, because some skin care manufacturers can use harmful chemical ingredients that would never be allowed to be taken orally, but are still absorbed into our system, through our skin.

SO - WHAT DOES "NATURAL" AND THE UBIQUITOUS "ORGANIC" MEAN ON SKIN CARE PRODUCT LABELS?

Nowhere does the idea of "natural" or "organic" take a more gratuitous bruising than in the [skin care industry](#).

If we first take the word "natural" and look it up in the Concise Oxford Dictionary we would find this description of natural thus; "**existing in, or caused by nature; not artificial; uncultivated; wild existing in natural state; not disguised or altered**".

It seems pretty clear what "natural" actually means to me! Does it to you? However when vested interests in the skin care industry get hold of the word natural - they put a whole new slant on it. It may seem pretty clear to you and me exactly what we mean by natural but for the marketing men they obviously haven't read the dictionary and start bending the interpretation of natural to suit themselves.

Many labels have long lists of chemical names, some followed by the phrase "derived from ..." (some natural substance). This is grossly misleading for consumers who are looking for genuine safe skin care products.

Synthetic Chemicals are anything but natural!

When chemicals such as Cocamide DEA or Sodium Hydroxysultaine are followed by the words "derived from coconut oil" the consumer is led to believe that these synthetic chemicals must somehow be "natural". While this may be true in some cases where a natural oil or extract is actually used, it is ultimately irrelevant because what you end up with after the chemical solvent extraction and processing is usually anything but natural or pure. It is just another chemical concoction with some rather awful sounding long names to describe the process the original "natural" substance went through

Now what about "organic"?

Again if we look in the dictionary for the word organic it is pretty obvious to us what we expect to find as far as safe natural products in general are concerned. Would you say in the context you are expecting to use or find the term organic that this would be a fair description;

"produced and involving production without the use of pesticides, artificial fertilizers or synthetic chemicals."

To me it seems rather elementary that when describing a product as organic that the above is exactly what the customer would expect. However to the marketing men this is not what they mean by organic. Lets delve a little deeper into this play on words

To create Cocamide DEA, a foaming agent found in some shampoos, requires the addition of a synthetic chemical and known carcinogen, Diethanolamine – DEA, to the coconut oil. It is therefore no longer natural, or safe! If we look at the term "organic" on a label, we usually think it means "grown and cultivated without the use of chemicals" as stated above. That is the conclusion most skin care companies would like us to come to when they use the rather loose term organic.

Unscrupulous skin care companies are cynically using the chemistry definition of "organic" – which is also defined in the dictionary as "a compound that contains a carbon atom" to confuse consumers. This is known in the trade as confusion advertising so the real picture becomes blurred. Carbon is found in everything that has ever lived. Vested interests - by using this definition of organic, they are saying that a toxic petrochemical preservative called Methyl Paraben is "organic" because it was formed from natural leaves that rotted over thousands of years to become crude oil, which was then used to make this toxic totally un-natural preservative.

How absurd is this when consumers are looking for natural skin care products?

The play on the word organic gets even worse. An increasing number of companies are now claiming to use "organic" herbs in their products. But, what about the rest of the ingredients? Are they safe? Are they "natural" or from an "organic" source? Surely there must be an authority that governs the use of the term "organic" on labels? **The simple answer is NO.**

What skin care products are truly natural?

The term "**Certified Organic**" **IS** governed by a number of internationally recognised bodies. In Australia the Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA) is the largest. Searching for products with the logo of a certifying body on the label is the only way you can guarantee the organic authenticity and integrity of every ingredient in the product. This can then truly be called a **natural** skin care product. Without the "Certified Organic" label, the organic claim means nothing, as it cannot be verified and most likely it is a complete hoax perpetrated by the marketing men and their hype.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE ARE BUYING IS REALLY A "NATURAL" SKIN CARE PRODUCT?

Fortunately, there is a very simple way to differentiate between the hype and truth in skin care and that is to read the ingredient list on the label. It is a legal requirement that all skin care products must be labelled with the ingredients in descending order of their quantity in the product. A good rule of thumb

is to divide the ingredient list into thirds: the top third usually contains 90-95% of the product, the middle third usually contains 5-8% and the bottom third, 1-3%.

Here is the ingredient list of a so-called "natural" and "organic" skin moisturizer from a well known "natural" skin care company.

APRICOT CREAM	
"Natural" or "Organic" ingredients include	
1	Water (deionised)
2	Isopropyl Palmitate (Palm Oil Derivative)
3	Apricot Kernel Oil
4	Bis-Diglyceryl Caprylate/Caprinate/Isostearate/Stearate/Hydroxystearate Adipate (vegetable Triglyceride)
5	Glyceryl Stearate SE (vegetable derived)
6	Caprylic/Capric Triglyceride (glycerin-derived emollient)
7	Ceteareth - 12 (Organic Emulsifier)
8	Tocopherol Oil (vitamin E)
9	Chamomile Extract
10	Sage Extract
11	Linden Extract (Lime Blossom Extract)
12	Balm Mint Extract
13	Shea Butter (From Karite)
14	Wheat Germ Oil
15	Carrot Oil
16	Cetyl Alcohol (organic Co-emulsifier)
17	Sodium Hydroxide (pH Adjuster)
18	Sorbic Acid (Organic Compound)
19	Tocopherol Acetate (vitamin E Derivative)
20	Methyl Paraben
21	Propyl Paraben
22	Imidazolidinyl Urea (Organic Compound)
23	Fragrance
24	FD & C Yellow No 5, D7C Red No. 33.
Content: Apricot oil (2.5%)	

Take note of the last point that says "Content: Apricot Oil (2.5%)". Notice Apricot Oil is No 3 on the list. Because skin care manufacturers are required to list the ingredients in descending order this means everything AFTER Apricot Oil makes up less than 2.5% of the volume.

This effectively means that about 90% of the product is water and Isopropyl Palmitate. Isopropyl Palmitate is derived from Isopropyl Alcohol, synthetic alcohol and Palmatic Acid, a fatty acid from palm oil. It is known to cause skin irritations and dermatitis and has been shown to have comedogenic (acne promoting) properties!

Nos 5 and 6 are all produced by chemical reactions between various fatty acids and glycerol (synthetic glycerine). They are largely synthetic and have been shown to cause allergies and dermatitis! Far from natural!

No 7 is a synthetic emulsifier that may contain dangerous levels of ethylene oxide and dioxane - both are known carcinogens. Again far removed from natural!

Nos. 8 to 15 are natural ingredients used in tiny amounts merely to make the product look good. They may have been grown using toxic organo-phosphates, other pesticides and chemical herbicides and extracted with the use of chemical solvents. Again anything but natural!

No. 16 May be natural or synthetic and has been shown to cause contact dermatitis and eczema.

No. 17 Is otherwise known as caustic soda or lye - a powerful drain cleaner extremely alkaline and corrosive. A known sensitizer for many people with sensitive skin.

No. 18 Sorbic acid was once isolated from the Mountain Ash berry, but is now chemically synthesised and is a toxic preservative. No longer natural!

No. 19 is synthetic Vitamin E.

Nos. 20-22 are toxic and allergenic preservatives which have been linked to increasing oestrogen levels in women and is implicated in the rising incidence of breast cancer

No. 23. Probably synthetic, may contain phthalates that have been linked to birth defects. [Phthalates](#) are toxic gender bending chemicals found in virtually everyone tested for them. It is certainly not natural to have phthalates in your body or on your skin I can assure you.

No. 24. Synthetic colours that could be potentially carcinogenic

Now let's look at an ingredient list of a Certified Organic natural body moisturiser.

This ingredient list says

CERTIFIED ORGANIC NATURAL BODY INTENSIVE	
1	Proprietary blend of organic native Australian distilled herbal NATURAL extracts,
2	Organic Safflower oil
3	Purified Water
4	Organic Avocado oil
5	Organic Cocoa butter
6	Non-GMO Lecithin
7	Organic Sugar-Cane Ethanol
8	Organic Unrefined Beeswax
9	Lime
10	D-Panthenol (pro-vit b5)
11	Olive extract
12	Grapefruit extract
13	Sclerotium gum
14	Organic orange
15	Vanilla extract

1. Is a proprietary blend of organic natural native Australian distilled herbal extracts.
2. Is cold-pressed from organic safflower seeds.
3. Purified Water.
4. Is cold-pressed from natural organic avocado fruit.
5. Is from organic cocoa beans. Natural!
6. Is from non-genetically modified soybean oil. Natural!
7. Is from organic sugar. Natural
8. Is from organic beehives! Natural
9. Is cold pressed from the skin of organic natural limes.
10. Is a precursor to vitamin B5. Natural!
11. Is from natural olive leaves.
12. Is from grapefruit seeds. Natural!
13. Is a natural gum.
14. Is cold-pressed from organic natural orange peel.
15. Is from natural vanilla beans.

WHAT ARE THE NATURAL ALTERNATIVES TO CHEMICALS?

All skin care products, both synthetic and natural, contain items from the following categories in some combination or other:

EMOLLIENTS

Emollients serve two functions; they prevent dryness and protect the skin, acting as a barrier and healing agent. Water is the best emollient, but because it evaporates quickly it is ineffective. It needs to be held on the skin by emollient oils in what is called an emulsion. Synthetic emollients are occlusive i.e. they coat the skin and do not allow it to respire (much like plastic wrap), which can cause skin irritation. Some synthetic emollients can accumulate in the liver and lymph nodes. They are also non-biodegradable, causing a negative environmental impact. Far from natural!

Natural emollients actually nourish the skin and care for it. They are metabolised by the skin's own enzymes and absorbed into it. They are readily biodegradable and are of edible quality. Completely natural!

Some Synthetic Un-"Natural" Skin Care Emollients:

PEG compounds (eg PEG- 45 Almond Glyceride) may contain the toxic by-product dioxane Synthetic alcohols (anything that contains the phrase benzyl -, butyl-, cetearyl-, cetyl -, glyceryl-, isopropyl-, myristyl propyl-, propylene-, or stearyl-) eg Isopropyl Palmitate, Diglyceryl Caprylate) have been shown to cause allergies and dermatitis. Hydrocarbons (eg mineral oil, petrolatum, paraffin) contain carcinogenic and mutagenic Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) and can cause chemically induced acne. Silicone Oils (eg dimethicone, cyclomethicone, copolyol) can clog the skin like plastic wrap and cause tumours when painted on lab animals (according to the Material Safety Data Sheet supplied by the manufacturer).

Some Natural Skin Care Emollients

Plant Oils (eg. Jojoba, Avocado, Rosehip) Shea, Cocoa and Jojoba Butters

HUMECTANTS

The main purpose of any cream is to keep the skin moist. Many conventional creams form a suffocating film on the skin to prevent moisture loss. Even a natural humectant, glycerin, actually attracts water from the air and surrounding tissue. It keeps the skin moist as long as there is sufficient moisture in the air. In a dry climate it actually draws moisture from the skin. Collagen, elastin and keratin enjoy some popularity as humectants. Whilst they are compatible with the skin and deposit a protective film, they are usually sourced from animals and therefore cannot be termed "cruelty free". Some skin care companies would like you to believe that your skin can use special animal proteins to rejuvenate and replace aging cells. This is nonsense! The size of the molecules, even when broken down (hydrolysed), are far too large to penetrate the skin. Even if they could get in, they would be immediately rejected as foreign matter and attacked by the immune system.

Natural phospholipids, from lecithin, are fantastic humectants. An important benefit of phospholipids is that they are hygroscopic (attract water from the surrounding air) and hold water where an increased level of hydration is needed. Therefore, phospholipids increase the hydration levels of the skin without being occlusive (forming a film to prevent water loss, and preventing normal cellular function). A recent study proved the value of topically applied phospholipids in skin care. It found that environmental factors (sun, wind, pollution) and the detergents and solvents, found in most skin cleansers, actually stripped the natural phospholipid content from the top layer of skin. This loss resulted in a rough feel and a pitted appearance under a microscope. Importantly, the phospholipids in the uppermost skin layers cannot be replaced by natural cell function, as the top layer of cells no longer metabolise; they serve only as a protective barrier.

Remarkably, the study showed that topically applied plant phospholipids restore the barrier function of the skin, protecting it from substances such as bacteria and harmful chemicals.

Some Synthetic Un-"Natural Humectants

1. Propylene Glycol – causes irritation and contact dermatitis
2. Ethylene/Diethylene Glycol – causes irritation and contact dermatitis
3. PEG compounds (eg Polyethylene Glycol) – may contain the toxic by-product dioxane

Some natural Humectants

1. Lecithin
2. Panthenol (pro-vitamin B5)
3. Glycerin

EMULSIFIERS

Surface-active-agents are substances capable of dissolving oils and holding dirt in suspension so it can be rinsed away with water. They are used in skin cleansers and shampoos which are often claimed to contain "natural" ingredients

A serious problem with ethoxylated surfactants (those that utilise ethylene or propylene oxide in the chemical reaction) is that they are often contaminated with dioxane, a potent carcinogen. The exact same toxic carcinogen sprayed on the Vietnam jungle during [Agent Orange](#) which caused hundreds of thousands of birth defects and cancers in Vietnamese civilians and huge increases in the cancer rates for US and Australian army personnel. Far from NATURAL!

These surfactants are listed on labels as ingredients ending with -eth, (like laureth) or containing the phrase PEG (Poly Ethylene Glycol), or PPG (Poly Propylene Glycol). Another dangerous class of surfactants are amides. These are listed on labels containing the term TEA - TriEthanolAmine, DEA - DiEthanolAmine and MEA MonoEthanolAmine. All compounds containing TEA, DEA, and MEA can undergo nitrosation with other chemicals to form nitrosamines, which are carcinogenic. One study found that over 40% of products containing triethanolamine (TEA) were contaminated with these potent carcinogens.

Would you call this "Skin Care"?

Natural saponins (foaming agents) are a much better choice for shampoos. They gently cleanse the hair skin and scalp without stripping the natural oils.

Some Synthetic Surfactants

1. Sodium or Ammonium Lauryl or Laureth Sulphate
2. Sodium Methyl Cocoyl Taurate
3. Sodium Lauroyl or Cocoyl Sarcosinate
4. Cocamidopropyl Betaine
5. TEA compounds
6. DEA compounds
7. PEG (Polyethylene Glycol) compounds
8. Quaternium -7,15,31,60 etc
9. Lauryl or Cocoyl Sarcosine
10. Disodium Oleamide or Dioctyl Sulfosuccinate
11. etc. etc. etc.

Some Natural Surfactants

1. Castile Soap
2. Yucca Extract
3. Soapwort
4. Quillaja Bark Extract

PRESERVATIVES

The decaying process is natural and happens with or without preservatives. Skin care products do not (and should not) last for ever. Just like food, all natural skin care products will eventually deteriorate and go rancid. The effectiveness, not safety, of synthetic chemical preservatives has only been "proven" by cruel animal testing. Chemical preservatives are generally used because they are much cheaper than, and extend the shelf life of the product more than natural alternatives. Once again so far removed from natural it isn't funny.

You know eating fresh natural produce is far better for you than eating denatured long shelf life food - Don't you? Well the same applies to your skin care products. Safe non-toxic fresh skin care products are far better for your health than the alphabet soup of chemical concoctions the "skin care" companies generally come up with.

Storing natural products in the fridge will help extend their life.

Some Synthetic Preservatives

1. Imidiazolidinyl Urea (Germall 115) and Diazolidinyl Urea (Germall II) Causes contact dermatitis. Germall 115 releases [formaldehyde](#) over 10°C. Un-natural!
2. DMDM Hydantoin Highly toxic, causes contact dermatitis, contains formaldehyde. Used in shampoos and deodorants. Un-natural!

3. Methyl, Propyl, Butyl and Ethyl Paraben Toxic, Causes allergic reactions and skin rashes. Used in a huge range of products and is implicated in increasing breast cancer rates when used as a preservative in underarm deodorants. UN-natural!
4. 2-Bromo-2-Nitro-Propane-1, 3-diol. (Bronopol). Toxic - causes allergic contact dermatitis. Used in face creams, shampoos, mascaras and bath oils.
5. Benzalkonium Chloride - Highly toxic, primary skin irritant. Used in shampoos, conditioner and deodorants. UN-natural!
6. Quarternium-15 Toxic, causes skin rashes and allergic reactions. UN-natural!
7. Chloromethylisothiazolinone and Isothiazolinone - Cause contact dermatitis
8. Methylisothiazolinone and Methylchlorisothiazolinone- Both cause allergies
9. Butylated Hydroxytoluene (BHT) and Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA) - Both cause allergic contact dermatitis - worse BHT is carcinogenic!

This alphabet soup of unnatural synthetic chemicals which go into making the average skin care product and/or cosmetic is believed to be playing a major part in the enormous increase in cancer rates in the developed countries of the world. Research scientists such as [Dr Samuel Epstein](#) have been speaking out strongly for decades trying to warn the public of the dangers of un-natural toxic chemicals in personal and skin care products. We are losing the "winnable war on cancer" due to vested interests totally ignoring the damage that low level exposure to toxins over many years do to our immune systems. Our grandparents were never exposed to this vast array of artificial toxic chemicals.

Some Natural Preservatives

1. Tea Tree essential oil
2. Thyme essential oil
3. Grapefruit Seed Extract
4. D-Alpha Tocopherol Acetate (Vitamin E)

IS "NATURAL" REALLY BETTER?

Well you make your own mind up! There are some people who really do think that there are "safe" synthetic chemicals which can be applied to the skin and eaten in food without doing any harm. However didn't the cigarette manufacturers maintain for over thirty years that the chemicals in smoke never caused cancer too? Is it natural to breath deadly toxic fumes into your lungs everyday? Is it natural to care for your skin by plastering it in totally un-natural chemicals - the vast majority which have never been tested for long term toxicity? It is easy to bury your head in the sand and ignore these dangers as we listen to the hollow platitudes of vested interests who are making billions from a gullible public.

If we look at chemicals from a historic point of view we see a pattern of wonderful chemical and drug breakthroughs which are going to change life for the better. They are sold to us on a platform of hype and false promises as the answer to all sorts of problems. Subsequent disastrous side effects and countless deaths have been caused by some of these new wonder chemicals and drugs before they were pulled off the market and banned long after the damage had already been done.

Remember the miracle of DDT? How this was going to revolutionise farming in the world and destroy all the natural insect pests. Now every single living creature on earth today, humans included, carry a burden of DDT stored in their fat cells with who knows what consequences for generations to come. What about thalidomide? Remember the miracle drug to ease women through the "sickness" of bearing a child. How many tens of thousands of children were born with defects from this incredible chemical folly?

How would you feel if by your uninformed use of toxic chemicals it caused ongoing severe medical problems for your loved ones in the future?

The search for newer, better and safer synthetic chemicals goes on and on - with new chemicals being released at a staggering rate onto the market and the unsuspecting public. When you really think about

it, the entire process is so futile and foolish and is only being pursued in the name of corporate profit. Mother Nature has always had the answers for us yet man seems hell-bent on ignoring the most basic rule of all and that is to live in harmony with nature not try to control it. Ultimately nature reduces us back to the earth. For many of us, sadly well before our time is due, we will be struck down by deadly cancer. The rate is already 1 in 3 in the US and is running very close behind in the UK and other developed countries.

We should all avoid toxic synthetic chemicals from all sources. We can do this largely by sourcing organic produce as much as we possibly can and using only certified organic completely natural personal care products and cosmetics.

You may be amazed at the huge difference these simple measures will make to your health.