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Skin care: The ayurvedic way

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Skin, the largest and the most versatile organ of human body is also the best indicator of our general health. It is the first sense to develop and respond to any stimulus (inside mother's womb in uterus during 8 to 14 weeks of gestation) and remains the only proximal sense organ throughout our life. Skin is a body's natural heating and air conditioning system that regulates temperature helping us maintain the correct range for its physiological activities. It is a waterproof wrapping for our entire body and first line of defense against bacteria and other organisms. It is an organ that gives us sensation about pain, pleasure, temperature and pressure besides cooling body via sweat. As a passageway, it rids our body of toxins and helps prevent chemical and waste build up. Since skin is highly innervated, and with a potential to modify perception of touch, it is occasionally referred to as body's "diffuse brain". Receptors for touch are present in skin tissues making it a social organ at the interface of outside world and brain. Skincare is therefore extremely important as it is an index of our health. Today we depend on cosmetics and Botox treatment for glowing and youthful skin but the early civilizations used simple home remedies for skin decoration and care. Egyptians indulged in facial decoration and mummification as they associated it with a 'magical' role while Greeks are credited with oil based pastes for glowing skin. The Chinese and Japanese ladies used gold and rice powder for skin whitening. The Indian system of skin care is rooted in Ayurveda, an inseparable part of Hindu culture. It offers a complementary holistic therapy which works alongside mainstream medicines. According to Ayurveda there are 5 primordial elements namely, earth, air, fire, water and ether and everything around us is made up of these. They give rise to three principles in human body – the doshas or energies and three skin types- Vata, Pitta and Kapha. The Ayurvedic medication is focused on taking care of skin in a manner that infuses life into it. Ayurvedic skin care is massage-based where a combination of pressure, vibrations and aromatic oils of plant origin is used to rejuvenate skin. Various therapies like Shirodhara, Ubtan, Udvartana and others are discussed by the author.

Biography

Inderdeep Kaur is presently working as an Associate Professor in Botany, SGTB Khalsa College, University of Delhi, India. She has travelled widely and participated in several international conferences. As a Plant Scientist, she has been exploring their medicinal values. She believes that in conferences on health, most of us talk about heart, brain or disorders but skin our largest sense organ does not get much attention. She has made an effort in this presentation to discuss skin care as an important health regime.

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