

# Face It Skin care by Ayurveda

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Based on the laws of nature, and indigenous to India, Ayurvedic skin care is derived from holistic medicinal practices that began over 5,000 years ago.

Image courtesy of COMO Shambhala Estate, Bali

We are all unique with different constitutions externally, internally, emotionally and spiritually. What we all share is that we carry within us a combination of the elements of fire, air, water and space (ether). Just as diet and exercise regimes suit the individual, so too does skin care. Ayurvedic principles abandon limited Western attitudes and embrace old healing traditions. The approach to skin care is holistic and considers the mind, body and spirit as a whole.

The Ayurvedic belief is that there are three basic principles or humors. Common combinations of the elements are known as doshas. The main principles are known as Vata, Pitta and Kapha – or Tridosha. These principles are believed to work together in harmony to make up the entire body.

## HUMAN CONSTITUTION

The five elements that manifest in the human body to determine one's dosha are:

VATA = AIR + ETHER

PITTA = FIRE + WATER

KAPHA = EARTH + WATER

Together they govern all biological, physiological and physiopathological functions. When out of balance, they contribute to the disease process. We need each of the elements, but there is usually one that is dominant in each of us. As seasons change, our lifestyles change, and so does our constitution. This is known as conditional constitution or Vikruti.

	VATA	PITTA	KAPHA
SEASONS	Autumn	Summer	Winter
AGE	50+	17-49	0-16

## KNOW YOUR AYURVEDIC SKIN TYPE

The first step in the holistic Ayurvedic approach to skin care is finding out your Ayurvedic skin type. Which one are you?

**Vata skin** is generally dry, thin, delicate and cool to the touch. It easily gets dehydrated and is very vulnerable to the influence of dry, windy weather. Vata skin may age faster and tends to be dry, rough and flaky when out of balance.

**Pitta skin** tends to be fair, sensitive, soft, warm and of medium thickness. It is less tolerant to hot food, heat and stimulants. It tends to be more prone to freckles and moles than other skin types. When out of balance, it can flare up in rashes, rosacea,

acne or sunspots.

**Kapha skin** tends to have all the qualities of water and earth – it can be oily, thick, pale, soft, cool and more tolerant of the sun. It tends to age slower and form less wrinkles. It can be more prone to dull complexion, enlarged pores, excessive oil, blackheads, pimples, moist types of eczema and water retention.

**'Combination' skin** can be Vata-Pitta (both dry and sensitive), Kapha-Pitta (oily and sensitive) or Vata-Kapha (generally dry with some oily zones).

## VATA SKIN CARE

For Vata skin to stay youthful, skin care products should be very nourishing. They must include oils and herbs in combination, which can nourish and warm the skin and rehydrate it, otherwise it may be susceptible to wrinkles and premature ageing. Vata skin needs increased circulation, so herbs that are heating and nourishing will help. Going to bed on time, eating regular meals and following a regular daily routine are essential components of a holistic approach to Vata skin care, as are eating foods that help balance Vata. Drink lots of lukewarm water for internal hydration. For added lubrication, include a little fat such as Ghee (clarified butter) in your diet and self-massage with warm, herbalised oil. Provide additional deep lipid support with facial oil. Get plenty of rest so your mind, as well as your body, has the opportunity to recharge.

**Traditional Ayurvedic Treatment** – 24K Gold Facial. Gold helps to increase circulation and brings a warmth and glow to the face. Intensely hydrating, 24K gold regenerates cells. Ideal for dry skins, it leaves the skin with a wonderful radiance and luminosity. Gold Facial treatments include Gold Scrub, Gold Toner, Gold Cream, Gold Gel and Gold Mask, which in combination gives the best results.

**Traditional Ayurvedic Treatment** – Vatakizhi is a unique treatment that combines massage and herbs to help relieve dryness of the skin. It is also designed to treat stiff joints, muscle pain and back aches. Specially selected Ayurvedic herbs are wrapped into a small, hand-sized cloth bag and steeped in warm herbal oil, then gently massaged over the entire body (or the area to be treated). The herbs relax the body, soothe sore muscles, reduce tension, relieve aches, pains and strains, stiffness in the joints and inflammation. The process also helps stimulate circulation of the blood and improves dryness of the skin.

### \* VATA

Vata is associated with the qualities of air, dry, cold, brittle, irregular and random.

### \* PITTA

The word pitta, when translated from sanskrit, means 'to heat or burn'. Characteristics are hot, sharp and spicy.

### \* KAPHA

The earthy dosha has characteristics that are heavy, cool, soft and thick.

## PITTA SKIN CARE

The Pitta skin type needs both cooling and nurturing. Use skin care products that help to calm and soothe. Avoid tanning treatments and therapies that expose your delicate, sensitive skin to heat for extended periods of time. Ayurvedic herbs like Sandalwood, vetiver and rose can help calm Pitta skin from becoming inflammatory.

*Suggestions for caring for Pitta skin:* You will benefit from sweet, juicy fruits and cooked greens. Avoid hot, spicy foods, alcohol and an excess of deep-fried foods since these increase heat to an already fiery constitution. Stay away from harsh, synthetic cosmetics as they can damage sensitive skin and cause breakouts.

*Traditional Ayurvedic Treatment* – Silver has cooling properties, as does pearl. A pure Silver Facial incorporates the cooling and calming properties of pure silver leaf and finely grated cucumber to soothe and settle sensitive skin and give your complexion a boost. It includes a calming compress with Silver Toner and water, a gentle massage with silver facial cream, followed by a double mask – a gel mixed

with freshly grated cucumber to cool and hydrate, followed by a herbal silver mask mixed into a fresh paste with milk and honey.

## KAPHA SKIN CARE

Kapha skin is more prone to accumulate ama – toxins under the skin. People with Kapha skin need to detoxify regularly, both internally and externally, to flush toxins from the skin. Buffing the skin with a gentle exfoliant can help external cleansing.

*Suggestions for caring for Kapha skin:* The oiliness of Kapha skin calls for a diet that is warmer, lighter, less oily and free of heavy food that is hard to digest. Eating more bitter, astringent and pungent tastes help stimulate digestion and balance Kapha. Avoid too many sweet foods or deep-fried foods, as they add to the oiliness of the skin. Exercise every day to improve circulation. A daily massage with warm oil and stimulating herbs will help improve circulation. Cleanse your skin twice every day and exfoliate at least once a week. Cooking with warming spices, such as ginger and black pepper, helps the digestive fire and inhibits accumulation of toxins in your body.

*Nourishment for skin:* Besides following the diet for your body type, the following foods are terrific skin-enhancers: leafy green vegetables; easily digested proteins, such as paneer, milk, tofu and sunflower seeds; foods high in zinc, such as quinoa (a type of grain); and foods rich in beta-carotene, such as carrots and sweet cherries. Almonds and walnuts support the skin with their protein and lubricating fat content. Skin-friendly spices include turmeric to nourish the first four layers of the skin; cumin to rid the body of ama; black pepper to cleanse the channels; and fennel to balance the transformational ability of the skin. All antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables, such as pomegranate, apple, pear and bitter, green leafy vegetables are excellent for the skin.

*Traditional Ayurvedic Treatment - Strawberry Facial.* Fresh strawberries help renew and revitalise. Pure herbs, such as Sacred Lotus, Almond Oil and Zinc, smooth and nourish. A member of the rose family, strawberries are rich in Vitamin C, potassium, sodium and iron, and its salicylic acid properties help eliminate dead surface cells. Strawberries help warm the skin and stimulate blood circulation to the capillaries, encouraging nutrients to the skin's upper layers.

## STRESS ON SKIN

There are three types of stress and all three impact the skin in different ways.

*Mental stress* starts a chain reaction that results in drying out the moisture in the skin. Thinning, dryness and shrinking of the 'shrotasa' (micro channels) that carry nutritive fluid to the skin result in wrinkles and stress lines.

*Emotional stress* also affects the skin. Notice how anger or embarrassment can turn your face red. This shows the connection between emotions and the skin. If emotional stress becomes chronic, the result is acne, sun sensitivity and other Pitta-based problems.

*Physical stress*, such as too much, working too much or straining the body over a period of time, causes physical stress. This causes moisture in the skin to dry out, leading to rough, aged skin.

## WHAT AYURVEDA SAYS ABOUT DRY SKIN

According to Ayurvedic texts, dry skin is caused by Vata dosha. When Vata dosha increases in the body, it reduces Kapha and makes the skin dry and wrinkled. (Kapha keeps skin soft and smooth, whereas Vata makes the skin dry and rough).

The factors that increase vata dosha in the body:



- Exposure to cold and dry climates
- Controlling natural urges like urination, defecation, hunger, thirst, etc
- Staying awake late at night
- Irregular food habits
- Excess physical or mental exertion
- Consumption of spicy, dry or bitter food

The body has a remarkable capacity to heal itself, but artificial stimulants, chemicals and synthetics can retard the body's natural healing mechanisms.

Your skin is the protective barrier between the inner world and the outer world. Its quality reflects your inner vitality and health. By looking after your skin, you are protecting yourself, as well protecting your world. 🌿

*Yasmin Sadikot is the founder of OmVeda Ayurvedic Herbal Skin + Hair*  
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ABOVE: Ayurvedic herbs are wrapped into a small, hand-sized cloth bag called a Vataquizhi.