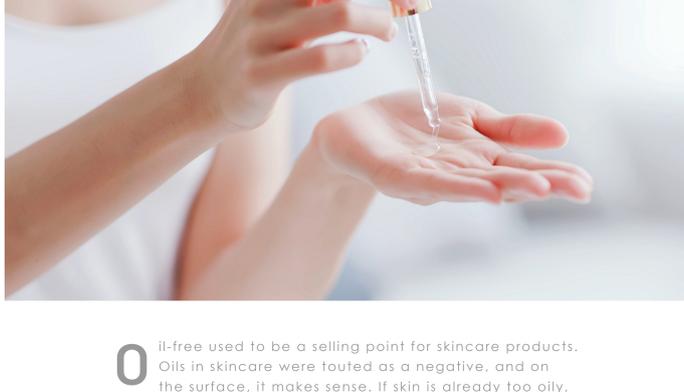


The Truth About Using Oil On Your Skin

by Deborah Duffey, Chief Product Development Officer and President | Sep 17, 2021



Oil-free used to be a selling point for skincare products. Oils in skincare were touted as a negative, and on the surface, it makes sense. If skin is already too oily, why would anyone want to add more oil? And further, oil causes pimples and clogged pores—right? But while oil-free formulations have their place, we now understand that oils can be used on skin with surprisingly powerful benefits, and that those effects that oil was purported to cause aren't always an issue.

If you're skipping out on oils for fear that they may clog pores or give you an oily face, you're missing out on an entire line of beneficial products. The truth is that no matter what your skin type, there's an oil for you.

Why Oil Has a Bad Name

No one wants oily skin, so why would you choose to apply oil to your face? After all, oil clogs pores, can cause acne, and leaves behind a greasy sheen. And while this can be true of some oils, in reality, the right oil can treat all the issues it's been blamed for.

Oils can be an issue when they become unbalanced. The overproduction of oil can cause pores to become congested with sebum and dead skin, causing acne, blackheads, and inflammation. But oftentimes, this overproduction of oil has more to do with what's going on inside the body—like hormones or your genetics—than the products you put on top (although the products you use can play a major role, too!).

When oil-free skincare products became a fad, it got these key points wrong. Yes, some oils cause greasy, congested skin, but not all oil is bad. Skin actually needs oil, so much so that it produces its own.

Why Skin Loves and Needs Oil

Skin naturally produces oil in sebaceous glands, which are inside hair follicles and pores. Sebum, the official name for the oil we produce, is a mix of naturally occurring substances like cholesterol and fatty acids. This oil is necessary to keep skin healthy. At its core, it protects skin from the elements, and from dirt and bacteria. It's also what keeps skin looking healthy. The right balance of oil does everything you want your skincare to do—it prevents dryness and breakouts, supports healthy aging, and imparts a natural glow.

Adding in oil through skincare can be an easy way to naturally work with skin to give it the tools it needs to be healthy.

Why You Should Add Oils to Your Routine

The right oil can naturally balance skin, evening out excessive oiliness and bringing hydration to dry skin. Oil itself isn't necessarily a moisturizer, but you might find that it makes skin feel more hydrated. This is because while it can help retain moisture, it doesn't actually add any. If you have oilier skin, adding oil can balance your natural oil production in a way that keeps skin hydrated without moisturizer. Drier skin types might find that adding an oil makes their moisturizer work better by acting as an occlusive that locks in hydration.

Oils are packed with antioxidants and vitamins, too. These can help with premature aging, like fine lines and dark spots, and can support the skin's natural healing process. Some oils have anti-inflammatory properties to calm down irritation and redness, and others are antibacterial to protect skin and prevent acne. Each oil is unique in where it performs best, but many overlap in their benefits.

One last reason to use oils? Oils can feel super luxurious to use, and allow you a moment of enjoyment while you care for your skin.

Which Oil is Right for You?

There are many, many oils to choose from, and even more combinations of those oils that may work for your skin. When deciding which to use, it's best to target your skin type and any skin concerns, such as aging, acne, or dryness.

While you'll discover more oils as you explore products, here are some popular oils you'll find in many formulations.

Almond Oil: Almond oil excels as a hydrator, thanks to its fatty acids. This means it can reduce irritation, hide the look of scarring, and add a natural glow. It's full of antioxidants, which makes it a great option to add protection against UV rays (sunscreen is still a must!). It can also help heal stretch marks anywhere on the body.

Squalane: Squalane is a very unique oil. Squalene (notice the spelling change) is naturally produced in our own skin cells and acts as a moisturizing agent, an antioxidant, and it can reduce fine lines. It naturally decreases as we age, so adding it back in can give skin another boost. In order to remain stable in skincare products, it goes through a small molecular change. Using squalane can boost skin's hydration, give your skin a more vibrant glow, and even boost collagen production, leading to a range of anti-aging benefits.

Argan Oil: Argan oil can be used by all skin types, but it's especially adept at treating acneic skin. It can regulate sebum production and prevent skin from becoming too oily or too dry. Argan is full of vitamin E, which can calm redness and inflammation, as well as treat scarring. It has antibacterial properties, so it can aid in healing skin infections. Use it on your hair, too!

Tea Tree Oil: Tea tree oil is best for acne-prone skin and to treat blemishes. It's antibacterial, and it can target acne-causing bacteria with less irritation and dryness than typical acne treatments. Because of its strength, it should only be used diluted or in pre-formulated products.

Joboba Oil: Jojoba is popular because it closely mimics the natural sebum in our skin. It can be used for all skin types to balance skin and support healthy hydration, and it has a long list of benefits: it's antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, and has vitamins and antioxidants to support skin. It works amazingly well as a carrier oil, supporting other powerful oils in one formulation.

CBD Oil: CBD (cannabidiol) oil is new to skincare, but the ingredient is popping up everywhere. While it is a trendy ingredient, the potential for benefits is real. When applied topically, CBD oil has shown promising results in calming skin inflammation while hydrating. It's good for a wide range of skin types, from aging to acne-prone to sensitive. It's derived from hemp plants, and CBD products are required by law to have low amounts of THC (the molecule that causes psychoactive effects), so using trustworthy CBD products won't result in a failed drug test.



Are There Oils That Shouldn't Be Used On Skin?

Not all oils should be used on the skin. It's not a good idea to use the vegetable oil from your kitchen on your face, for example. Others are less obvious. Coconut oil is a popular DIY beauty product but it's actually comedogenic, meaning it can clog pores in some people. The same goes for avocado oil, evening primrose oil, and flaxseed oil.

But even this gets complicated. Those oils, along with jojoba oil (which is wonderful for skin!) shouldn't necessarily be avoided. For one, each person's skin is so unique that what gives one person acne may be the cure for breakouts in another. This is why patch testing is always recommended. More importantly, the quality of these ingredients greatly affects its likelihood of clogging pores. When jojoba oil and other oils are ultra-pure, **they are not comedogenic**. Where a company sources their oils from can make a big difference, and it's why the same oil from one company may cause acne and that oil from another becomes your holy grail skincare product.

There is one category of oils that you should be cautious of: essential oils. While essential oils are used in many, many skincare products, it's not advised to use them on your skin without proper research. Never use essential oils on the skin without diluting, and be aware that some oils, like citrus oils, can cause photosensitivity and make the skin more likely to burn in the sun. They are powerful, however, and can be extremely beneficial when used correctly!

How Oils Are Used in Skincare Products

While we've mostly discussed using oils as a treatment themselves, they can also be used in other ways. First, it's important to note that oils are often mixed together with other oils and ingredients to enhance their benefits and improve the overall efficiency of the formula. Individual oils are available as well.

But oils aren't limited to this usage. Oil cleansing, which is sometimes followed by a second cleanser (this is called double cleansing), is popular for how efficiently it removes makeup. Oils can break down long-wearing products like waterproof mascara, and can be better than typical cleansers at removing foundation and sunscreen. Oil cleansing can also remove excess oil (and dirt and sweat!) without stripping skin of the protective oil it needs.

Oils can also be mixed into products that don't necessarily feel or look like a typical oil. If you look at the ingredients list of your favorite products, you'll most likely see that oils are already incorporated into the items you use every day, although they may not be in a high enough concentration to make the formula itself feel oily.

One example of a moisturizer that leverages the use of oils without feeling oily is the [Kara Vita Indulgence Moisturizer](#). It's made with avocado oil, sunflower seed oil, almond oil, and jojoba oil, along with other ingredients. While it's packed with oils, it never feels oily—just thick and creamy. Although avocado and jojoba are considered comedogenic, this is another case of how sourcing makes a difference. The right formulation and product means that you can enjoy the benefits of these oils without the negative effects.

How Oil Can Be Used Directly on the Skin

Sometimes, when to use an oil in your routine is pretty straightforward—an oil cleanser, for example, will be your first step. When using a blend of oils or standalone product as a treatment, when to use it is less clear.

The general rule when it comes to layering skincare products is to apply from the thinnest to the thickest product, after cleansing. Usually, this looks something like a watery toner, followed by a light viscosity serum, and finished up with a thick moisturizer. But oils, no matter their thickness, should most often be used either right before or right after moisturizer—but when, exactly, depends. Usually, it's best to use oils after moisturizing. Because oils can help lock in hydration, using them over moisturizer can give a boost to the moisturizer underneath it. Some oils, though, like those that act as a treatment (for example, oils high in vitamin A that act as anti-aging retinoids), may be best to use under moisturizer. When in doubt, follow the instructions on the label or the advice of your dermatologist or esthetician.

Oils can be extremely beneficial to all skin types, and while they may seem scary at first, the right oil won't cause acne or turn your skin into an oily mess. Look for those products that are targeted to your skin type and your concerns, and you'll quickly see how transformative the right oil can be.