



HOMEMADE SKIN CARE RECIPES

*The working reference behind every recipe
— strengths, pairings, substitutions and shelf
lives.*

CPC Skin Care

DIGITAL SELF-HELP GUIDE



The Ingredient Apothecary

*The working reference behind every recipe —
strengths, pairings, substitutions and shelf lives.*

CPC SKIN CARE

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WELCOME

Before You Begin

Every recipe you have followed so far was written for somebody else's face. It told you two tablespoons of something without telling you why, what that ingredient was doing, or what changes if your skin is drier, oilier or more reactive than the person who wrote it down. So the first time a recipe stings there is nothing to adjust — only the choice to abandon it. This book turns that dead end into a dial. Inside are forty ingredients used across the whole system, each with the same entry: what it actually does, the strength that is sensible, what it pairs well with, what it must be kept away from, how long the finished preparation keeps, and who should skip it entirely. Once you know that, the recipes stop being instructions and become starting points. The Oat & Honey Cleansing Paste gets gentler or richer on purpose. The Week's Toner Bottle gets swapped for something your skin prefers. A recipe that stings gets diluted rather than binned. Two things are worth saying plainly before the entries start. First, this is educational content, not medical advice, and it is not a formulation course — nothing here will teach you to make a stable water-and-oil cream at home, because a kitchen cannot preserve one safely. Second, every entry ends with a patch-test line and a shelf life for a

reason. Knowing more about ingredients should make you more careful, not less. The 24-hour patch test from the foundation guide applies to everything in this book, without exception, including the ingredients you have used happily for years in a different combination.

— *The CPC Skin Care Team*

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Getting the Most From This Book

This is a practical book by design — but it isn't a race. The recipes work best when you make them one at a time and let each earn its place. Here's how to get the most from the pages ahead.

1

Read actively.

Every chapter ends with a *Try This* exercise and a set of *Key Takeaways*. The reading plants the idea; the exercise is what makes it yours.

2

Start small.

You don't need to make everything at once. Choose a single recipe, let it become genuinely easy, and only then add another.

3

Patch-test everything.

Skin is personal. A preparation that suits one face irritates another, so test on your arm for 24 hours before it ever touches your cheek.

4

Keep what works.

Some recipes will click for you and others won't — keep the ones your skin likes and quietly drop the rest.

Whenever you're ready, turn the page and let's begin.

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How To Read An Ingredient

Before the entries, a short lesson in reading them. Four questions answer almost everything you will want to know about any ingredient you meet, in this book or anywhere else, and asking them in order will save you from most bad recipes on the internet.

What is it doing, and at what strength

Function first: is it cleaning, soothing, absorbing oil, holding water, or sealing? Most ingredients do one of those well and the rest badly. Honey holds water and calms. Clay absorbs oil. Jojoba seals. An ingredient asked to do a job it is not shaped for is where most disappointing recipes come from.

Then strength. Almost nothing on skin is used neat, and the difference between useful and harmful is usually a number rather than a substance. Tea tree at one per cent is a reasonable spot treatment; tea tree neat is how people acquire a permanent sensitivity. When an entry in this book gives a percentage, it is the most important line in the entry.

When an entry gives you a percentage, that line matters more than the ingredient's name.

What does it need to work, and what ruins it

Some ingredients need water present, some need to be sealed in, some need to come off before they dry. Clay is useless once it has dried hard. Humectants like honey and glycerin need moisture underneath them or they pull water from the skin instead of holding it there — which is exactly why every routine in this system applies the damp step before the seal.

And some combinations cancel or irritate. Not many, and the internet exaggerates the list, but the real conflicts are worth knowing. Chapter five collects them in one place.

How long does it last once it is a preparation

The shelf life of an ingredient and the shelf life of what you make from it are different numbers. Dry oats last months; oat paste lasts one use. Honey is effectively stable forever; honey stirred into water is a three-day preparation in the fridge. Water is what changes the answer, every time.

So each entry lists the ingredient's own storage and the life of a typical preparation made from it. When those two numbers disagree, the shorter one always wins.

Try This — Interrogate One Recipe

Take any homemade skincare recipe you have saved and put it through the four questions.

1. Write down what each ingredient is there to do. Cross out any you cannot answer for.
2. Check whether any strength is given. If not, that is a warning, not an oversight.
3. Ask whether it needs a damp step underneath or a seal on top.
4. Work out its real shelf life from the wettest ingredient in it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Function, strength, conditions, shelf life — four questions answer almost any ingredient.
- The difference between useful and harmful is usually a number, not a substance.
- The wettest ingredient in a preparation sets its shelf life.

CHAPTER 2

The Calming Ingredients

These are the backbone of the system: the things that soothe, hold water and reduce visible irritation. They are also the most forgiving, which is why the foundation guide leans on them so heavily and why almost every recipe you will build yourself should start here.

Why calming does most of the work

Most visible skin complaints — redness, roughness, that tight reactive feeling, the mark left behind after a spot — are inflammation or dehydration wearing different clothes. Calming ingredients address both, and they do it without asking anything of the barrier.

That is why a routine built almost entirely from this chapter outperforms an ambitious one built from chapter three. Gentleness is not the beginner option here; it is the strategy.

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Humectants need something to hold

Honey and glycerin are humectants: they hold water against skin. In a damp environment that is exactly what you want. Applied to a dry face in dry air they will draw water from the skin itself, which is why they always go on damp and always get sealed with an oil afterwards.

This single mechanism explains the order of every routine in this system, and it is the most common thing homemade recipes get wrong.

Fresh produce is a shelf-life problem

Cucumber, yogurt and fresh aloe from the plant are lovely on skin and are also food. Anything with them in it is a two- to three-day refrigerated preparation at the very most, in a scalded jar, with the date on the lid.

When in doubt, make single-use amounts. A tablespoon of yogurt costs nothing; a week-old jar of it on your face is a genuinely bad idea.

GENTLE CLEANSING, SOOTHING MASKS, ITCH RELIEF

Colloidal / finely ground oats

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: honey, yogurt, water
- Avoid: coarse flakes, which scratch

METHOD

1. This is the Base Oat Powder from the foundation guide: blitz plain rolled oats to a flour and sieve out all grit.
2. Use at roughly 1 tbsp per application, mixed to a paste.
3. Never scrub — the paste does the work, not pressure.

KEEPS Dry: 3 months airtight · Paste: single use

PATCH-TEST 24 hours as a paste

Oat or gluten sensitivity — substitute fine rice flour.

HUMECTANT, MILDLY ANTIBACTERIAL, CALMING

Raw honey

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: oats, clay, yogurt, aloe
- Avoid: hot water, which thins it out

METHOD

1. Use neat as a 60-second cleanse, or at 10-50% in masks.
2. Always apply to damp skin and seal with oil afterwards.
3. For spot use, apply with a fresh cotton bud, never fingers.

KEEPS Jar: indefinite · Mixed with water: 3 days refrigerated

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Bee allergy. Never on broken or weeping skin. Not for infants under one.

COLD COMPRESSES FOR HEAT AND REDNESS

Chamomile

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: green tea, aloe
- Avoid: applying warm to inflamed skin

METHOD

1. Brew strong, cool completely, use as a compress for 10 minutes.
2. Store in a scalded bottle in the fridge.
3. Always cold — heat sends more blood to an inflamed area.

KEEPS 3 days
refrigerated

PATCH-TEST 24 hours — genuinely necessary
here

Ragweed and daisy-family allergies. It is a common cross-reactor.

LIGHT HYDRATION, COOLING, POST-SUN COMFORT

Aloe vera gel

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: green tea, a drop of oil on top
- Avoid: fragranced 'aloe' gels

METHOD

1. Use pure gel, ideally 99%+, without added alcohol or colour.
2. Apply to damp skin, wait a minute, then press oil on top.
3. Fresh leaf gel is a 2-day refrigerated preparation at most.

KEEPS Bottled: per pack,
refrigerated · Fresh leaf: 2 days

PATCH-TEST 24 hours — aloe irritates
more people than expected

Anyone who has reacted to aloe before; never on broken skin.

TONERS, COMPRESSES, ANTIOXIDANT SUPPORT

Green tea

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: glycerin, aloe, oats
- Avoid: reusing a bottle past 3 days

METHOD

1. Brew strong for 5 minutes and cool completely before bottling.
2. Use as the damp step before oil, morning and night.
3. This is the workhorse of the Week's Toner Bottle.

KEEPS 3 days refrigerated in a scalded bottle

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Anyone who reacts to tea. Discard at any change in smell or clarity.

SOOTHING INFUSIONS FOR REACTIVE SKIN

Calendula

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: oats, chamomile, plain oils
- Avoid: alcohol-based tinctures on the face

METHOD

1. Infuse dried petals in warm oil for 5 days, then strain thoroughly.
2. Or brew as a tea and use cold, like chamomile.
3. Strain completely — leftover plant matter spoils the batch.

KEEPS Infused oil: 2 months · Tea: 3 days refrigerated

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Daisy-family allergies, same as chamomile.

COOLING MISTS ON WARM DAYS

Cucumber

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: cooled boiled water
- Avoid: carrying it around all day warm

METHOD

1. Blend and strain through muslin into a scalded bottle.
2. Refrigerate immediately and mist onto clean skin.
3. Follow with moisturiser while still damp.

KEEPS 2 days refrigerated — shorter than tea

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Anyone tempted to keep it beyond two days.

A COMFORTABLE, SOFTENING DAMP STEP

Rice water

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: glycerin, aloe
- Avoid: fermenting it at home

METHOD

1. Rinse rice once, discard that water, soak in fresh water 20 minutes.
2. Strain the cloudy water into a scalded bottle and refrigerate.
3. Use within three days, whatever it looks like.

KEEPS 3 days refrigerated

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Do not ferment — that is a bacterial culture on your face.

THE HUMECTANT THAT MAKES TONERS HOLD WATER

Vegetable glycerin

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: any water-based preparation
- Avoid: using more than ~5%

METHOD

1. Add about 1 tsp per 150ml of tea or water.
2. Always apply to damp skin and seal afterwards.
3. If the finish feels tacky, you have used too much — halve it.

KEEPS Bottle: 2 years · In a preparation: as the water dictates

PATCH-TEST 24 hours in the finished preparation

Very dry air with no seal on top — it will pull water outward.

SOFTENING MASKS, VERY MILD LACTIC ACID

Plain unsweetened yogurt

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: oats, clay, honey
- Avoid: flavoured or sweetened varieties

METHOD

1. Use 1 tbsp, mixed fresh, for a 2-10 minute mask.
2. Rinse with lukewarm water and moisturise damp.
3. Never reuse a mixed batch — make single portions.

KEEPS Single use only

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Dairy sensitivity; active, broken or weeping skin.

Try This — Build a Calming Shortlist

Most people need four calming ingredients, not ten.

1. Pick one cleanser base, one humectant, one tea and one gel from this chapter.
2. Patch-test any of the four you have not used before.
3. Build a week of routines using only those four.
4. Add a fifth only when you can name what it does that the four cannot.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Most visible skin complaints are inflammation or dehydration — this chapter addresses both.
- Humectants go on damp skin and get sealed, or they work against you.
- Anything made with fresh produce is a two- to three-day refrigerated preparation.

CHAPTER 3

The Clarifying Ingredients

These absorb oil, lift dead surface cells or draw out congestion. They are useful, they are also where homemade skincare most often goes wrong, and every single one of them belongs to short-contact use with a timer.

Clays are a family, not one thing

Kaolin is the mildest and suits almost anyone. Bentonite is considerably stronger and swells as it absorbs, which is why it feels so dramatic and why it dehydrates skin that did not need it. Rhassoul sits in between and is gentler than its reputation.

Match the clay to the area, not to the enthusiasm. Kaolin on cheeks, bentonite only on a congested T-zone if at all, and none of them left to dry into a cracking shell — that is the moment they stop absorbing oil and start pulling water out of the tissue underneath.

The tight feeling people call 'deep clean' is the same barrier stripping described everywhere else in this system.

Food enzymes are real, and mild

Papaya and pumpkin contain enzymes that loosen dead surface cells, and lactic acid in yogurt does something similar more gently. These are genuine mild exfoliants, which means two things: they work, and they can be overdone exactly like any other exfoliant.

Five minutes for a first use, ten as a maximum, once a week, never on reactive skin and never alongside a prescription retinoid or acid. If you are using something from a dermatologist, this chapter is not an addition to it — ask them first.

The flour-and-powder cleansers

Chickpea flour and fine rice flour make cleansing pastes that are mildly clarifying without any grit. They suit oilier skin in the morning and cost almost nothing.

The one rule that matters: never let them dry on the face. A drying paste tightens and pulls, and the tight feeling people associate with 'deep cleaning' is the same barrier stripping described throughout this system.

WEEKLY MASKS, MILD OIL ABSORPTION

Kaolin clay

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: yogurt, honey, green tea
- Avoid: metal bowls and spoons

METHOD

- 1.** Mix 1 tbsp with liquid to a spreadable cream in a non-metal dish.
- 2.** Apply to oilier areas only and set a timer for 8-10 minutes.
- 3.** Remove while still slightly tacky with a warm damp cloth.

KEEPS Dry: indefinite · Mixed: single use

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Dry or currently reactive skin. Never let it dry hard.

CONGESTED T-ZONE ONLY, OCCASIONAL USE

Bentonite clay

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: green tea, aloe
- Avoid: whole-face use and metal tools

METHOD

1. Use at half the quantity you would use of kaolin.
2. Apply to the congested area only, for 5-8 minutes maximum.
3. Remove early if it starts to tighten — do not wait for the timer.

KEEPS Dry: indefinite · Mixed: single use

PATCH-TEST 24 hours, and start at 5 minutes

Dry, thin, reactive or mature skin. Not for weekly use.

A MIDDLE OPTION FOR COMBINATION SKIN

Rhassoul clay

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: honey, yogurt
- Avoid: over-frequent use

METHOD

1. Mix 1 tbsp to a smooth cream in a non-metal dish.
2. Apply for 8-10 minutes, once a week at most.
3. Soften with a warm cloth to remove rather than scrubbing at the sink.

KEEPS Dry: indefinite · Mixed: single use

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Reactive skin during a flare.

MORNING CLEANSING FOR OILIER SKIN

Chickpea (gram) flour

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: yogurt, water
- Avoid: letting it dry on the face

METHOD

1. Mix 1 tbsp to a thin paste — thinner than feels right.
2. Apply for 60 seconds on damp skin, then rinse before it dries.
3. Follow with the damp step and a light seal.

KEEPS Dry: as packaged · Mixed: single use

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Legume allergy; dry or tight skin.

A GENTLE ALTERNATIVE TO OATS

Fine rice flour

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: yogurt, honey
- Avoid: coarse grades, which scratch

METHOD

1. Use only the finest grade, sieved until there is no grit at all.
2. Mix to a smooth paste for a 10-minute mask or a 60-second cleanse.
3. Remove with a warm damp cloth, never by scrubbing.

KEEPS Dry: 6 months airtight · Mixed: single use

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Anyone tempted to buy the coarse kind.

MILD ENZYME EXFOLIATION, ONCE A WEEK

Papaya (papain)

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: oats to thicken
- Avoid: the eye area entirely

METHOD

1. Mash ripe flesh and mix with a little oat powder.
2. Apply thinly. Five minutes on a first use, ten as an absolute maximum.
3. Rinse with cool water and moisturise on damp skin.

KEEPS Single use only

PATCH-TEST 24 hours, and start at 5 minutes

Reactive or broken skin, latex-fruit sensitivity, or anyone using prescription retinoids or acids.

A GENTLER ENZYME OPTION THAN PAPAYA

Pumpkin

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: honey, oats
- Avoid: raw pumpkin left on too long

METHOD

1. Use cooked, cooled, mashed pumpkin — not raw purée from a tin with additives.
2. Apply for 5-10 minutes maximum, once a week.
3. Rinse cool and moisturise damp.

KEEPS Single use only

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Reactive skin; anyone on prescription exfoliants.

OCCASIONAL CONGESTED-AREA MASKS

Activated charcoal

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: kaolin clay
- Avoid: expecting it to 'pull out' anything

METHOD

1. Use a pinch mixed into a clay mask, not on its own.
2. Apply to congested areas for 8 minutes.
3. Remove with a warm cloth — it stains fabric, so use a dark one.

KEEPS Dry: indefinite · Mixed: single use

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Peel-off charcoal masks with glue — those genuinely damage skin.

LIGHT ASTRINGENT FOR OILY AREAS

Alcohol-free witch hazel

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: aloe, green tea
- Avoid: any version containing alcohol

METHOD

1. Check the label — most supermarket witch hazel is alcohol-heavy.
2. Use on oily areas only, not the whole face, a few times a week.
3. Always follow with a moisturiser.

KEEPS Per the bottle

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Dry, thin or reactive skin; daily whole-face use.

Try This — The Timer Rule

Everything in this chapter is safe because of a timer, not despite one.

1. Never apply anything from this chapter without setting a timer first.
2. Start every new enzyme or clay at the shortest stated time, not the longest.
3. Remove early if the skin tightens, whatever the timer says.
4. Use one clarifying ingredient per week, not three.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Kaolin is mild, bentonite is strong, rhassoul sits between — match the clay to the area.
- Food enzymes are real exfoliants and can be overdone like any other.
- Never let a clay or flour paste dry hard on the face.

The Oils & Butters

This is where a kitchen genuinely outperforms a bathroom shelf, because anhydrous preparations — pure oils, balms and butters — contain no water, need no preservative and keep for months. Everything here is a seal, applied last, over a damp step.

Choosing by feel, not by claim

Marketing sorts oils by exotic origin. Skin sorts them by weight and by how well they sit. Jojoba is technically a wax and sits closest to skin's own sebum, which makes it the safest first choice for almost anyone. Squalane is light, odourless and exceptionally well tolerated. Sunflower and grapeseed are light and cheap. Almond and argan sit in the middle. Shea, cocoa and coconut are heavy.

Nothing here is objectively better than the rest. A heavy butter that suits dry winter cheeks will congest an oily T-zone, and a light oil that suits oily skin will feel like nothing at all on a dry one.

Nothing here is objectively better than the rest — a butter that saves dry winter cheeks will congest an oily T-zone.

Rancidity is the real shelf-life question

Oils do not grow bacteria, but they do oxidise, and a rancid oil smells faintly of crayons or old nuts and is an irritant. Heat, light and air accelerate it, which is why every oil in this system lives somewhere cool and dark rather than on a sunny windowsill.

Vitamin E slows that oxidation, which is genuinely useful and frequently misdescribed. It is an antioxidant for the oil, not a preservative for anything water-based. It will not make a water-containing cream safe, and no amount of it ever has.

Less than you think

Two or three drops, warmed between the palms and pressed — not rubbed — over damp skin. That is the entire technique from the daily ritual, and it is the reason most people who think oils feel greasy are simply using four times too much.

Give it two minutes before deciding it was not enough, then add a single extra drop only where the skin still feels tight.

THE DEFAULT SEAL FOR ALMOST ANY SKIN

Jojoba oil

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: squalane, any damp step
- Avoid: nothing in particular

METHOD

1. Use 2-3 drops on damp skin, pressed in.
2. Forms the base of the Two-Oil Daily Blend.
3. Store cool and dark, not on the windowsill.

KEEPS 12 months unopened, 6 once in use

PATCH-TEST 24 hours on the inner arm

Very few people react — but patch-test anyway.

THE LIGHTEST, BEST-TOLERATED SEAL

Squalane

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: jojoba, aloe
- Avoid: paying for exotic branding

METHOD

1. Use alone or at about 25% of an oil blend.
2. Excellent for oily skin that dislikes anything heavier.
3. Odourless and very stable — a good travel choice.

KEEPS 2 years — one of the most stable options

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Nothing common; a safe starting point.

A CHEAP, LIGHT, HIGH-LINOLEIC OPTION

Sunflower oil

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: oat infusion, shea
- Avoid: the low-linoleic 'high oleic' cooking type

METHOD

1. Choose cold-pressed where possible.
2. Use alone or as the base of the Oat-Infused Comfort Oil.
3. Store cool and dark; it oxidises faster than jojoba.

KEEPS 6 months cool and dark

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Anyone with a sunflower seed allergy.

LIGHT SEAL FOR OILIER SKIN

Grapeseed oil

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: squalane
- Avoid: buying large bottles — it oxidises

METHOD

1. Use 2 drops on damp skin.
2. Buy small bottles and finish them.
3. Discard at the first faint crayon smell.

KEEPS 3-6 months — shorter than most

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Anyone who cannot use it up before it turns.

A MID-WEIGHT SEAL FOR NORMAL TO DRY SKIN

Sweet almond oil

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: shea, calendula infusion
- Avoid: if there is any nut allergy in the house

METHOD

1. Use 2-3 drops on damp skin at night.
2. Good carrier for infusing dried calendula.
3. Store cool and dark.

KEEPS 6-12 months

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Nut allergy — no exceptions, and be careful sharing bathrooms.

NIGHT USE ON MARKS AND TEXTURE

Rosehip oil

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: jojoba to stabilise it
- Avoid: daytime use — it oxidises fast

METHOD

1. Use at night only, 2 drops, on damp skin.
2. Blend at about 25% into jojoba rather than using neat.
3. Refrigerate it — this one genuinely benefits.

KEEPS 3-6 months refrigerated

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Congestion-prone skin at full strength.

MID-WEIGHT SEAL, GOOD ON DRY PATCHES

Argan oil

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: jojoba, shea
- Avoid: 'argan-infused' products with little in them

METHOD

1. Use 2 drops at night on damp skin.
2. Excellent on lips, cuticles and dry patches too.
3. Buy small and cold-pressed.

KEEPS 12 months cool and dark

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Nut-allergic households, to be safe.

RICH NIGHT BALMS FOR DRY, COLD-WEATHER SKIN

Shea butter

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: jojoba, sunflower, beeswax
- Avoid: melting it over direct heat

METHOD

1. Melt gently over warm water, never directly on the hob.
2. Blend with a lighter oil, cool fully, then whip briefly.
3. Use a pea-sized amount at night over the damp step.

KEEPS 12 months · Whipped balm: 3 months

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Oily or congestion-prone areas — keep it off the T-zone.

VERY RICH BALMS FOR BODY AND DRY PATCHES

Cocoa butter

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: shea, sunflower
- Avoid: whole-face use

METHOD

1. Melt gently and blend with a lighter oil to soften the texture.
2. Use on hands, elbows and very dry patches.
3. Keep it well away from the face if you are congestion-prone.

KEEPS 2 years — very stable

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Facial use on oily or breakout-prone skin.

BODY USE; FACE ONLY IF IT GENUINELY SUITS YOU

Coconut oil

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: nothing that needs to stay light
- Avoid: assuming it suits your face

METHOD

1. Perfectly good on the body and as a hair treatment.
2. On the face, patch-test on a small area for two weeks, not 24 hours.
3. Stop at the first sign of small bumps or congestion.

KEEPS 2 years

PATCH-TEST Two weeks on a small facial area — this one deserves the longer test

Most breakout-prone faces. It congests a lot of people.

Try This — Three Drops, Two Minutes

The technique matters as much as the oil.

1. Mist or splash the face and wait until it feels cool rather than wet.
2. Warm exactly three drops between clean palms.
3. Press it in with flat palms — no rubbing — and set a two-minute timer.
4. Only after the timer, add one more drop where the skin still feels tight.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Choose oils by weight and how they sit, not by exotic origin.
- Oils go rancid rather than mouldy — cool, dark, small bottles, and bin the crayon smell.
- Vitamin E protects the oil. It preserves nothing water-based, and never has.

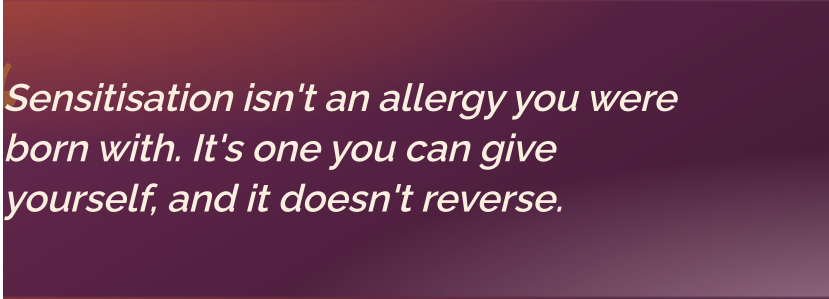
Dilution, Pairing & Conflicts

This is the chapter that stops a knowledgeable person from doing something harmful. Most of homemade skincare's genuine injuries come from concentration errors rather than from exotic ingredients, and almost all of them involve one of the seven entries below.

Essential oils, and the one per cent rule

Essential oils are concentrated to a degree that is easy to underestimate. For facial use, one per cent is a sensible ceiling — that is roughly one drop in a teaspoon of carrier oil or honey. Neat application on the face is how people acquire permanent sensitisation, which means reacting to that oil forever afterwards, including in products they used to tolerate.

Sensitisation is not an allergy you were born with. It is one you can give yourself, and it does not reverse. That is the entire reason this chapter exists.



Sensitisation isn't an allergy you were born with. It's one you can give yourself, and it doesn't reverse.

The real conflicts, and the imaginary ones

The internet's list of forbidden combinations is largely invented. The real ones are short: do not stack multiple exfoliants in the same session, do not combine a homemade enzyme mask with a prescription retinoid or acid without asking whoever prescribed it, do not use two overnight preparations at once, and do not add anything acidic to a preparation you intend to leave on for hours.

Beyond that, most calming ingredients combine happily. The greater risk in practice is layering three unfamiliar things at once, because when something reacts you have no idea which one to remove.

Waxes, and what water really means

Beeswax and candelilla wax turn an oil into a balm. They are stable, useful and simple: about one part wax to four parts oil, melted gently over warm water. Candelilla is the plant-based swap for anyone avoiding bee products.

And a final word on water. The moment water enters a preparation, it becomes perishable — three days in the fridge, in a scalded container, with the date on the lid. Cooled boiled water is the minimum standard; distilled is better. There is no home method that changes this, which is why this system puts the water on your skin and the oil over the top instead.

DILUTED SPOT TREATMENT ONLY

Tea tree essential oil

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: honey as the carrier
- Avoid: neat application, always

METHOD

- 1.** One drop per teaspoon of honey or carrier oil — about 1%.
- 2.** Apply to the spot only, with a fresh cotton bud.
- 3.** Write the ratio on the bottle so you never guess.

KEEPS Bottle: 12 months · Mixture: single use

PATCH-TEST 24 hours in its diluted form

Neat use, the eye area, broken skin, or anyone previously sensitised.

SCENT IN BALMS, AT LOW CONCENTRATION

Lavender essential oil

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: shea balms
- Avoid: leave-on facial use at any real strength

METHOD

1. Use at 0.5-1% maximum, and preferably in body products.
2. Add after melting, once the mixture has cooled slightly.
3. Skip it entirely if your skin is reactive — scent is optional.

KEEPS 12-18 months

PATCH-TEST 24 hours diluted

Reactive skin, and anyone who does not need their moisturiser to smell of anything.

BODY PREPARATIONS ONLY

Peppermint essential oil

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: body balms
- Avoid: the face entirely

METHOD

1. Keep it below 0.5% and off facial skin.
2. The cooling sensation is a nerve response, not evidence of benefit.
3. Never near the eyes — the vapour alone stings.

KEEPS 12-18 months

PATCH-TEST 24 hours diluted, on the body

Facial use, children, and anyone with reactive skin.

SLOWING OXIDATION IN OIL BLENDS

Vitamin E (tocopherol)

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: any oil blend
- Avoid: treating it as a preservative

METHOD

1. Add a few drops per 50ml of oil blend.
2. It extends the life of the oil, nothing more.
3. It does not make a water-containing preparation safe. Ever.

KEEPS 2 years

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Anyone relying on it to preserve a cream — that belief causes real harm.

TURNING OILS INTO BALMS

Beeswax

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: shea, jojoba
- Avoid: overheating, which dulls it

METHOD

1. Use roughly 1 part wax to 4 parts oil by weight.
2. Melt gently over warm water and pour into a scalded tin.
3. Let it set at room temperature — refrigerating makes it grainy.

KEEPS Balm: 6 months cool and dark

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Bee allergy — use candelilla instead.

THE PLANT-BASED BALM HARDENER

Candelilla wax

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: shea, jojoba
- Avoid: using it 1:1 with beeswax quantities

METHOD

1. It is harder than beeswax — use about half as much.
2. Melt gently over warm water and test a spoonful as it sets.
3. Adjust and remelt if the texture is wrong.

KEEPS Balm: 6 months cool and dark

PATCH-TEST 24 hours

Nothing common — a good vegan swap.

THE BASE OF EVERY WATER PREPARATION

Cooled boiled or distilled water

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: tea, glycerin, aloe
- Avoid: straight tap water into a stored bottle

METHOD

1. Boil, cool fully, and use in a scalded bottle.
2. Refrigerate everything containing it and date the lid.
3. Three days, then bin it without inspection.

KEEPS 3 days as a preparation, refrigerated

PATCH-TEST Test the finished preparation, not the water

Any attempt to store a water preparation at room temperature.

Try This — Label the Bottle

The dilution you cannot remember is the dilution you will get wrong.

1. Write '1 drop per 1 tsp' directly on every essential oil bottle you own.
2. Move all essential oils to a separate box from the ingredients you use freely.
3. Throw out anything you have previously used neat on your face.
4. Introduce one new ingredient at a time, never three.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- One drop per teaspoon — about 1% — is the ceiling for essential oils on the face.
- Sensitisation is permanent and self-inflicted. That is why the rule is absolute.
- The real conflicts are few: stacked exfoliants, stacked overnight layers, and prescription actives.

Shelf Life & Storage

The last chapter is the shortest and the one that keeps everything else safe. Knowing more about ingredients tends to make people bolder about keeping preparations longer, which is exactly the wrong conclusion to draw.

Three categories, three answers

Dry things — powders, clays, flours — last months in an airtight jar, provided nothing damp ever goes into them. Anhydrous things — oils, butters, balms — last months and fail by going rancid rather than by growing anything. Water-containing things last three days in the fridge, and that number is not negotiable by any home method.

Almost every storage mistake comes from applying an answer from one category to another. A jar of honey lasts forever; honey in water lasts three days. The wettest ingredient always sets the clock.

A batch costs pennies and takes minutes. An infected preparation on your face costs considerably more.

How to tell a preparation has turned

For water-based preparations: cloudiness, a colour change, bubbles or fizz, a slick film, or any shift in smell. For oils and balms: a faint crayon, putty or old-nut smell, or a texture that has gone sticky rather than slippery.

Do not test any of these on your face to be sure. A batch costs pennies and takes minutes. An infected preparation on skin can cost you weeks of irritation, and on broken skin considerably more than that.

The habits that make the rules automatic

Scald jars with boiling water and dry them completely before filling. Use a small spatula rather than fingers, because fingers introduce both water and bacteria. Write the date you made it on the lid, not the date you hope it lasts. Make small batches so throwing one out never feels wasteful.

None of this is fussiness. It is the difference between homemade skincare being a good, cheap habit and being an occasional gamble on your own face.

THE HONEST NOTE ON PRESERVING WATER PREPARATIONS

Broad-spectrum preservative

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: nothing you can validate at home
- Avoid: believing a natural substitute works

METHOD

1. Proper preservation requires a broad-spectrum system used at a tested rate.
2. It also needs pH adjustment and, strictly, microbial testing to confirm it worked — which is why the never list rules out homemade preservation entirely.
3. None of that belongs in a kitchen — so use the three-day fridge rule instead.

KEEPS N/A PATCH-TEST N/A

Grapefruit seed extract, vitamin E and 'a splash of vodka' do not preserve anything.

ADJUSTING PH, IN TINY AMOUNTS

Citric acid

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: water-based preparations
- Avoid: using it as an exfoliant

METHOD

1. A pinch adjusts a preparation that feels alkaline.
2. Never use it to make an acid treatment — that requires measurement you cannot do at home.
3. If a recipe asks for a lot of it, do not make that recipe.

KEEPS Dry: indefinite

PATCH-TEST 24 hours in the finished preparation

Any attempt at a homemade chemical peel.

SANITISING JARS AND TOOLS — NOT SKIN

Isopropyl alcohol (70%)

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: your storage containers
- Avoid: your face, entirely

METHOD

1. Wipe scalded, dried jars and spatulas before filling.
2. Let it evaporate completely before anything goes in.
3. Keep it in the cupboard with the cleaning things, not the skincare.

KEEPS
Years

PATCH-TEST Not applicable — this never touches your face

Skin, at any dilution, for any purpose in this system.

INFUSIONS, WHEN KEPT PROPERLY DRY

Dried herbs and petals

YOU NEED

- Pairs with: carrier oils for slow infusion
- Avoid: fresh plant matter in oil

METHOD

1. Use fully dried material only — fresh introduces water and spoils the oil.
2. Infuse cool and dark for five days, then strain thoroughly through muslin.
3. Any solids left behind will spoil the batch, so strain twice.

KEEPS Dried: 12 months · Infused oil: 2 months

PATCH-TEST 24 hours on the finished oil

Fresh herbs in oil — that is a genuine botulism risk, not a fussy rule.

Try This — Date Every Lid

One habit removes almost every storage judgement call.

1. Put a marker pen in the same drawer as your jars.
2. Write the made-on date on every lid, without exception, as you fill it.
3. Set a repeating phone reminder for the mid-week toner swap.
4. When a date is more than three days old on anything water-based, bin it unexamined.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Dry lasts months, oils last months, anything with water lasts three days refrigerated.
- There is no home method that preserves a water-based preparation. None.
- Date the lid with when you made it, not when you hope it expires.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Your Action Plan

How to actually use a reference book: not by reading it end to end, but by looking things up and changing one thing at a time.

- ☐ Look up the three ingredients you already use most and read their entries tonight.

- ☐ Write '1 drop per 1 tsp' on every essential oil bottle you own.

- ☐ Move essential oils into a separate box from everyday ingredients.

- ☐ Throw out anything you have ever used neat on your face.

- ☐ Check every oil you own for a faint crayon or old-nut smell, and bin what has turned.

- ☐ Move all oils somewhere cool and dark — off the windowsill, out of the shower.

- ☐ Pick four calming ingredients and build a week from only those.

- ☐ Set a timer for every clay, flour or enzyme preparation you apply.

- ☐ Never introduce more than one new ingredient at a time.

- ☐ Put a marker pen in the jar drawer and date every lid as you fill it.

- ☐ Replace one recipe you follow blindly with one you can now adjust on purpose.

- ☐ Re-patch-test anything you are using in a new combination, even old favourites.

FINAL WORDS

Where You Go From Here

A recipe tells you what to do once. A reference tells you what to do next time, and the time after that, when your skin has changed or the season has or an ingredient has run out. That is the whole difference this book is meant to make. You can now look at any preparation — in this system, in a video, in a comment thread — and ask the four questions: what is each thing doing, at what strength, under what conditions, and how long does the result keep. Most bad recipes fail at least two of those questions immediately, and you will start noticing that quickly. Use the knowledge to be more careful rather than bolder. Dilute properly, introduce one thing at a time, keep the timer for anything short-contact, respect the three-day rule on anything containing water, and re-test old favourites when you use them in a new combination. The point of understanding your ingredients was never to make more complicated things. It was to make simple things that suit you exactly, and to know why they work.

Breathe. Begin. Return.

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