

Base oils (for use with the balm and moisturiser recipes inside)

Almond oil

Almond oil is light and penetrates the skin easily, leaving it soft and looking fresh. It is suitable for most skin types but as it is very mild it is particularly good for people who have sensitive and irritated skin.

Argan oil

Argan Oil has a remarkable ability to nourish, moisturize and improve skin elasticity. The oil is high in lipids including the omega-6 linoleic acid and omega-9 oleic acid. It is a potent anti-aging, hydrating and regenerating oil. The high polyphenol content makes it a strong antioxidant with a long shelf life.

Avocado oil

Avocado oil is very rich and moisturising. It is high in many nutrients, such as vitamins (A, B1, B2, B5, D and E), protein, lecithin, plant sterols and fatty acids. It penetrates the skin well. It also has the reputation as a healing and regenerative oil.

Coconut oil

A good choice for use in skin care products as it is light, non-greasy and won't clog your pores. It absorbs into the skin easily, leaving it soft and smooth. It is especially good for dry, itchy and sensitive skin. It also has a long shelf life and does not go rancid.

Jojoba oil

Jojoba is one of my favourite moisturising oils as it suits just about everybody. Jojoba is actually a liquid wax which resembles human sebum and contains a substance that mimics collagen. It helps to retain moisture and forms a protective film to keep out pollutants while at the same time allowing the skin to perspire, release toxins and shed dead layers. Jojoba can be used with both dry and oily skin. If you are overproducing sebum, jojoba oil will help to dissolve the sebum that is clogging the pores and restore the natural levels which protect the skin and keep it supple.

Shea nut butter

Shea butter is very moisturising as it penetrates the skin easily, leaving it feeling soft and smooth. It is very good for dry, damaged or aged skin, increasing elasticity and reducing the appearance of fine lines. It contains fatty acids, plant sterols vitamins (A, E, D) as well as catechins and plant antioxidants. Compounds such as cinnamic esters help to provide some protection from the sun's UV rays.

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Natural Beauty

Recently, I've had a lot of people ask me for advice about skin care, so I decided to write this newsletter about natural alternatives to expensive or high-street skin care products. I'll show you how to make a cleansing balm and moisturiser that are simple to prepare at home and could change the way you care for your skin.



As more of us are trying to move away from products that contain sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS), parabens and mineral oils, it can be confusing to know which ingredients are good alternatives that work just as well. Many cleansing wipes and foaming cleansers that contain alcohol and harsh surfactants are effective at removing makeup but they also strip away natural oils and alter the skin PH, making you prone to dry, tight, raw skin.

The cleansing balm and moisturiser recipes shown inside use only natural plant-based oils, which are great for removing makeup and grime as well as old sebum and dead skin from blocked pores. At the same time the oils nourish, moisturise and protect, preventing your skin from feeling stripped and parched. Everyone who has tried them has told me how wonderful their skin feels.

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For information about herbal medicine and nutritional consultations contact Ann Brennan on 07745 898911 or visit www.annbrennan.co.uk

Making the balm

The ingredients

There are many places online and in the high street that sell the ingredients shown in these recipes. Some online stores (I've no affiliation with them) include **Gracefruit Ltd** gracefruit.com, **Soap Basics** soapbasics.com and **Of A Simple Nature** ofasimplenature.webeden.co.uk.

Let's make it!

Simply follow the instructions in the panel to the right. It's really just a matter of melting the base oils in a bowl then adding the essential oils as they cool. You could get together with your friends and try out different combinations of oils. I know from my workshops it's a lot of fun.

The hot cloth method

This part is almost as important as the balm itself. It's a really effective way of applying the balm as the heat and steam opens and unblocks the pores while the cloth acts as a gentle exfoliant, getting rid of the dirt and dead skin cells. It also shrinks the pores, giving you a smoother more even skin tone.

Rub a 50p-size portion of balm in your hand to warm it up, then massage it on to your face and neck for about 2-3 minutes to loosen off your makeup and mascara. Get a clean face cloth or soft muslin cloth and soak in hot water, as warm as you can comfortably take. Wring out the hot cloth and place it over your face for a couple of minutes. With gentle circular movements, wipe off the cleanser, taking your makeup off along with all of the dead skin. Rinse and pat your skin dry then apply some moisturiser.

Cleansing balm

To make 100g of balm:

45g shea butter
45g virgin coconut oil
10 ml jojoba oil
10 ml almond oil
5g beeswax (granules or grated)
5 drops essential oil of your choice (this is optional – see the list opposite for some suggestions)

Melt all the ingredients in a double boiler or a Pyrex bowl over a saucepan of gently simmering boiling water.

After they have melted, remove from the heat and allow to cool slightly before adding the essential oils. Mix thoroughly and pour into sterilised glass jars.

If you have sensitive skin you can leave out the essential oils or use less.

Choose your own oils

You can substitute your own preferred blend of oils in the cleansing balm and moisturiser recipes depending on your skin type. To help you decide, here are some essential oils and base oils (back page) chosen for their great skin care benefits.

Moisturiser

Avocado, Rose & Geranium

This moisturiser is nourishing and hydrating. It helps to reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles leaving the skin feeling revitalised and looking radiant. It will also help to reduce uneven skin tone and pigmentation, giving the skin a flawless finish.

20 ml of almond oil
10 ml of coconut oil
10 ml jojoba oil
5 ml avocado
5g shea nut butter
5g beeswax granules
5g emulsifying wax
10 ml of rose water
3 drops of rose essential oil
2 drops of geranium essential oil

Heat the beeswax, cocoa butter and base oils in a bowl set over a saucepan of boiling water. Slowly add the emulsifier and rose water to the oil mixture using a fast whisk action for about 10 seconds. When the mixture cools down, add the essential oils. Again if you have sensitive skin you can leave out the essential oils or use less.

Variations include orange & geranium, rose & patchouli, frankincense & neroli, camomile or lavender.

Essential oils for different skin types

Ageing skin **Frankincense, geranium** and **neroli** have been used for thousands of years for their skin rejuvenating properties. They help to improve the elasticity and collagen production of the skin and reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. **Rose oil** is also very beneficial for dry, damaged or ageing skin.

Broken capillaries and redness **Cypress** is used to help repair and reduce the appearance of broken capillaries and redness. It combines well with **coriander** for blemished and oily skin, as they both help to balance the oil production.

Acne and spots A good combination for acne and oily skin is **geranium** and **rosemary**, as they are both cleansing, purifying and help to reduce puffiness, restoring the skin's natural radiance. **Lavender** tones the skin, helping to get rid of all the impurities. It can help to heal acne scars and improve the overall complexion.

Normal and sensitive skin **Clary sage** and **sandalwood** are very hydrating and are wonderful for brightening up dull skin and **camomile** is great for people with sensitive skin, as it is cleansing, calming and healing.