

# Professional BEAUTY

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**Chewing  
the fat**  
*the cellulite  
fight*

**PANACEA  
or POISON?**  
*on doctor's orders*

**GENERATE,  
DON'T  
HIBERNATE**

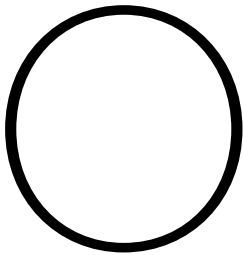
*wake up your  
business*

**All sySTEMs go!**  
*cell block strategy*

**Pelactiv**  
VISIBLY HEALTHY SKIN

# It's only natural

Dermatologist **Dr Adam Sheridan** (MBBS FACD FACMS FAAFPS) reveals his favourite natural remedies – readily available to us all.



Our patients often express an interest in 'natural' remedies. These are perceived as safer and 'cleaner' for the body and the environment. Far from being opposed

to such remedies, we recognise that much of modern medicine derives from nature. For instance, penicillin is harvested from fungi, anticoagulants were first discovered in mouldy sweet clover, and pro-coagulant wound dressings were developed from seaweed. Applied carefully and with due regard to safety, natural remedies certainly have a role to play. Here are some of my favourites.

## 1. Sunshine

Yes, you read that right! Despite my repeated warnings regarding the ill-effects of excessive sun exposure, I am equally aware of the potential benefits of sensible sun exposure.

Perhaps the foremost of benefits is the undoubted mood elevating effect of sunlight, through serotonin and melatonin release, which modulate sleep cycles and mood. The positive effect on sleep and mood in turn contributes to other health gains. After all, a happy mind equals a happy body. We all traverse a spectrum of moods each day, and generally that version of ourselves which meets the day with a sunny disposition makes the best health and life choices.

Sunlight's direct boost to health via vitamin D metabolism is also well documented. Vitamin D regulates calcium, phosphorous and magnesium, which are all vital for healthy bones, teeth and immunity. Healthy levels of vitamin D also benefit inflammatory skin disorders such as dermatitis and psoriasis.

The safest time to enjoy healthy sun exposure is two hours or more either side of the 'solar noon'. In south-eastern Australia this generally means sun exposure is safer before 10am and after 3pm.

## 2. Honey

Honey has been used through the ages for the treatment of abrasions, minor burns and leg ulcers. We continue to use honey in modern medicine,

where it is useful in the treatment of chronic leg ulcers and other challenging wounds. Our nurses regularly use honey for its soothing properties following cosmetic and laser treatments.

Honey is in effect a supersaturated mixture of sugars which inhibits bacterial growth. Furthermore, the interaction of honey and moist wound exudates results in the formation of hydrogen peroxide which delivers an additional antibacterial effect. Certain forms of honey such as Manuka honey are said to possess especially potent anti-bacterial activity.

Honey separately stimulates immune cell activity for a further benefit.

## 3. Sleep

Any way you look at it, sleeping early and well on a regular basis delivers huge benefits.

Quality sleep bolsters immunity, normalises mood and smooths our metabolism. Skin health is dramatically improved, with acne breakouts, cold sores, dull and flaky skin and bad hair days all reduced. The onset of wrinkles, volume loss and pigmentary lesions is delayed.

The only caveat relates to a recent finding that those who sleep more than eight hours a night may be at risk of shortened life, compared with those who sleep the 'medical ideal' of seven hours a night.

It is best to keep a regular schedule of waking and sleeping times so as not to confuse your body clock. Don't overload your system with excess food, alcohol or stimulants such as coffee and tea pre bed time. Natural soporifics may also prove helpful. These generally act via serotonin and include milk, valerian and saffron.

## 4. Water

The other source of all life. Like oxygen, love and money, water is rarely missed until it becomes scarce. Then nothing seems as vital. Two litres of fresh water a day (coffee, tea and juices don't count) facilitates the body's internal functions, and optimises the excretion of surplus metabolites and ingested toxins. The skin's lustre, turgor and texture benefit as heavily from internal hydration as from external moisturising.

## 5. Seawater and Chlorine

While on the topic of water, it would be remiss not to describe the benefits of swimming in seawater and properly chlorinated pools.

Hippocrates first used the word 'thalassotherapy' to describe the healing effects of seawater and the seaside climate. In thalassotherapy, trace elements of magnesium, potassium, calcium, sodium, and iodide found in seawater were believed to be absorbed through the skin.

Balneotherapy (the Latin for 'bath' is balneum) is the equally ancient treatment of disease by bathing at spas. Vitamins, mineral salts, amino acids and living micro-organisms are thought to produce beneficial antibiotic and antibacterial effects to promote a healthy immune system.

I believe that much of the benefit of such therapies derives from the act of swimming, combined with the action of mineral salts on the skin and the benefit of sunlight exposure during such activities. Not to mention the powerful psychological effect. The smells, sounds and feelings of the seaside



## age management | FEATURE

and swimming pools elicit deep childhood memories and feelings of renewal. Swimming is a great resistance exercise which improves circulation and oxygenation and also massages soft tissues and increases blood flow. Negative ions in seaside air are thought to increase oxygen absorption by the lungs.

Seawater and properly chlorinated pool water cleanses pores, balances oil production, exfoliates, reduces bacteria, and speeds healing. Moderate exposure (20-30minutes) increases hydration of the outer skin layers. This is especially useful for dermatitis, acne, dandruff and psoriasis.

Should you wish to mimic some of the benefits of actual seawater exposure, my recommended regime is a bath twice weekly. Add one-third cup salt to a tub filled with warm water, and swish to dissolve the salt. Soak for 15 to 30 minutes.

### 6. *Aloe vera*

The aloe vera plant has been used for thousands of years to address a variety of conditions, most notably burns, wounds and constipation. Aloe was also used to embalm the dead, as well as for perfume. Aloe vera is used in our clinic to treat thermal and sun burns, bruises, dry skin, dermatitis, athlete's foot, scarring and stretch marks. We routinely use aloe after laser treatments and certain skin surgeries to speed recovery.

### 7. *Nicotinamide*

Nicotinamide is an amide form of vitamin B3. Nicotinamide is made from niacin in the body. Unlike niacin, nicotinamide does not reduce cholesterol or cause flushing. Nicotinamide is sourced in trace amounts from tuna, chicken, pork, peanuts, sunflower seeds, beef, mushrooms, peas, avocado...and vegemite.

Long known for anti-inflammatory properties benefitting acne and rosacea, recent research has further captured the popular imagination. This suggested that a year of high-dose treatment with nicotinamide lowered the risk of non-melanoma skin cancers (BCC and SCC). Although based on a very small sample of only 385 patients, this is a promising Australian study suggesting that a simple vitamin might reduce skin cancer risk. Further research is ongoing. Nicotinamide appears to work by enhancing DNA repair following UV damage.

### 8. *Coconut*

As you would know, coconuts are 'in' right now, and with good reason! Coconut oil is a useful emollient for skin and hair, and also displays antibacterial properties. We use coconut oils and creams to soothe dermatitis, descale the scalp and subdue dandruff, and to strengthen and moisturise the hair.

### 9. *Vegetables that grow above ground.*

These vegetables are especially beneficial for bowel health. Skin and bowel are directly linked; a healthy bowel displays as healthy skin and vice versa. Probiotics and balanced exposure to bowel irritants such as wheat and dairy steal much of the limelight, yet nothing beats listening to your mother and seeking out these vegetables, which are high in fibre and vitamin C, to reduce bowel inflammation, cancer risk, and cravings for less healthy alternatives. All cruciferous vegetables are beneficial: cabbage, lettuce, bok choy, daikon, broccoli, Brussel sprouts and related green leafy vegetables. Spinach, mushrooms, avocado, eggplant and olives are also very healthy choices.

### 10. *Turmeric*

On the topic of bowel health, we often forget the mouth. The mouth is the gateway to the body. Dental hygiene is not only socially desirable; it contributes to general health and correlates with life expectancy and wellbeing.

Turmeric is well known to many as a spice and colouring agent in Asian cuisine. It also exhibits anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant and cancer-preventing properties and has been shown to promote wound healing. Useful in salves, we recommend turmeric-containing toothpaste as part of a balanced oral health regime. Of course, don't forget to floss and to consult with your dentist regularly.

### 11. *Smile*

Do it now! A smile is nothing but positive – for you and everyone around you. The simple act of a smile immediately lights up the room and generates powerful, positive feelings within you and all who regard you. This is true even when you or the other person do not feel happy in the moments immediately before the smile. Try it. The flow on effect is powerful – your happier self makes better choices and builds better life relationships. A further bonus is that a smile immediately cures any distracting volume loss and wrinkles in an instant! ■

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