

Natural and Organic Skincare Tactics

For those indulging in a spot of sunbathing – whether in the UK, or more likely, on holiday abroad – sun cream is a necessity. There are natural and organic sun lotions available for those who wish to avoid synthetic ingredients, many of which moisturise the skin via aloe vera and protect through vitamin E. Many paramount organic sun lotions also contain caffeine, which helps to firm the skin.

In an ideal world we would all be prudent enough to meet the sun whilst already lathered up in enough sun lotion to ensure that we do not get burnt. For many reasons - falling asleep in a lounger, falling asleep on a bench, falling asleep in a field, for example – this does not always happen, and we find ourselves with painful, and downright dangerous, sunburn. For those like myself who pick up the raw red glow of the crustacean rather than the pleasing golden glow of a Greek god after a session in the sun there are plenty of natural and organic after sun lotions out there. Of course, it is not a good idea to rely on after sun products instead of sun blocks, but using them to restore the skin after occasional sun burn can improve the skin and relieve the pain.

Organic after sun products are effectively designed to rehydrate parched skin, so a product with any moisturising oil such as aloe vera, olive oil or sesame seed derived oil (which might appear on the product's ingredients list as *sesamum indicum*) will do the job. Those that have some tan might want to look out for products with St Johns Wort and chamomile oil in them, as these will all help calm burnt areas and re-established a uniform tan across the body. In contrast to the growing trend for organic and natural after sun skincare products there has been recent research into corticosteroid creams that suggests that they are ineffective at treating sunburn, even though they are often suggested as good topical lotions for those effected.

Corticosteroids, such as hydrocortisone and bethamethasone, are most commonly used by those suffering from eczema, along with some other skin conditions. Sunburn is effectively a type of inflammatory skin condition – the body recognises the DNA damage that is caused by the UV-radiation of the sun and triggers several defence mechanisms, such as increasing melanin production so that the UV-photons can be turned into undamaging heat – but it is not certain whether corticosteroids can actually help the body recover from sun exposure.

In a recent study, published in the Archives of Dermatology, researchers treated one sample group of volunteers with corticosteroids creams prior to UV radiation and one sample group with the same creams 6 and 23 hours after exposure. It was found that those volunteers who had the cream applied before exposure suffered less badly from sunburn, whilst those that had the cream applied afterwards – as the creams are intended to be used – had the same level of sunburn as the control group, suggesting that the creams are not effective as after sun products.

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