

This month's Featured Archive Article:

Skin Made Better... Naturally

By Margaret Ancira



Science continues to offer us new and ever-changing ways to improve our skin, yet Mother Nature is still the best provider of the skin's most powerful protectors. What we have learned from medicine and science is that inflammation and free-radical damage are the main offenders in the aging process. These two reactions in the body are responsible for several types of damage and aging in the skin. Newly discovered skin care ingredients harness the power of science and Mother Nature to offer the ultimate in skin preservation.

As we age, the skin's natural defenses against free radicals decrease. This slow and steady loss of our skin's inherent protection increases our need to explore available topical agents to build our environmental resistance. Inflammation and free-radical damage occur in all parts of our bodies, yet our skin is particularly at risk as it is in direct contact with oxygen, UV rays and pollutants in our environment. Following are just a few newly discovered components found within the many exciting natural ingredients that are available for achieving and maintaining healthy and beautiful skin.

Newly 'E' merging antioxidants

Vitamin E has withstood the test of time for centuries as a popular soothing and healing nutrient. Its enemy, ozone, present in polluted air, decreases vitamin E content in the stratum corneum. This accelerates oxidation and destruction of cell membrane lipids, which in turn cause many varied skin problems. This is one of the reasons it is important to apply D-alpha tocopherol (one of the most commonly used forms of vitamin E) topically to replenish the vitamin E lost by the action of ozone on the skin. This chirally correct, lipid-soluble vitamin helps to neutralize free radicals. The American Academy of Dermatology believes vitamin E is the most important antioxidant in the body because of its protective effect on cell membranes. This antioxidant is abundantly available in many grains and plant oils. Vitamin E is often used in combination with another excellent antioxidant, vitamin C, as the E has the ability to "recycle" or boost the action of the ascorbic acid (vitamin C).

Some scientific circles have suggested that vitamin E may induce dermatitis or allergic reactions. This is largely because of the fact that other types of tocopherol are not chirally correct and can cause irritation. When D-alpha-tocopherol is used, these reactions are avoided.

One of the least known but most effective branches of the vitamin E family are the tocotrienols. They are naturally abundant in many plants, although they are present in much

lower levels. This makes the extraction an expensive ingredient to use in formulations. Alpha-tocotrienol, gamma-tocotrienol and delta-tocotrienol are all extremely potent antioxidants, UV protectants and anti-inflammatory agents. Their chemical structure allows them to more effectively penetrate through the lipid bilayer of each cell membrane. They provide the most visible antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits when used in concert with D-alpha tocopherol. Many may question the novelty of this compound because vitamin E has been around for so long in skin care preparations—science isn't one to rest on its laurels. Evolving technology has allowed us to delve deeper into unlocking the mysteries of ingredients that work, isolate the most active mechanisms in the vitamin, and introduce these newly recognized powerhouses in higher concentrations.

About Margaret Ancira



***Margaret Ancira**, founder and president of PCA Advanced Skin Care Systems, is a licensed esthetician and an internationally renowned chemical peel educator. Her patented chemical peel formulations aid in treating a variety of skin conditions including acne, rosacea, hyperpigmentation and sun damage. PCA Professional Products and PCA SKIN Clinical Care Products are used by select clinical practices in 60 countries. For more information, please call 1.877.PCA-SKIN or visit www.pcaskin.com.*