

Water And Beauty

Water is a basic ingredient whenever we bathe, wash our hands or face, or shampoo our hair. However, for many consumers (85 percent in the U.S. alone) this basic ingredient does them a disservice through its hardness. Hardness results when water picks up minerals from the ground, specifically calcium and magnesium. Water that has been "hardened" may no longer clean as well.

Many families especially enjoy the benefits of soft water for their daily grooming and beauty routines. Why? Because when hardened water comes in contact with skin, it may leave behind a white film or lead to redness and irritation of the skin. Also, hard water can leave behind minerals in the hair that can alter its true color. And, it requires the use of more shampoo to get hair clean and more soap to get skin clean. Using soft water for these activities is important for maintaining beautiful skin and hair.

Listed below are some beauty tips to help you and your family enjoy the benefits of soft water everyday.

Take A Luxurious Bath

We bathe or shower for cleanliness everyday as a matter of necessity, usually as part of a rushed morning routine. But at least once a week, it is nice to take time out for a long, leisurely soak in the tub. Baths can help us relax and unwind after a long day or get invigorated for an upcoming one. Even fifteen minutes away from the frenzy of your normal day can help restore and maintain your peace of mind. To help make the bath even more enjoyable and healthful, there are many botanicals you might want to consider adding:

- ▶ Sage can be added to ease sore muscles
- ▶ Licorice oil will stimulate pores
- ▶ Comfrey aids healing and acts as an astringent
- ▶ Ginseng can improve physical efficiency
- ▶ Powdered orris root works for deodorizing
- ▶ Rose petals in the bath are said to

destroy harmful skin bacteria (but even if they don't, the bath will smell wonderful)

- ▶ Jasmine relaxes
- ▶ Rosemary stimulates
- ▶ Cucumber tightens pores
- ▶ Lemon and strawberry benefit oily skin
- ▶ Tomatoes work well with dry skin
- ▶ Orange is great for normal skin
- ▶ Oatmeal and bran are great for deep cleaning and for relieving dry, chapped skin

To use any of these tonics in your bath, simply make a little nylon or muslin bag, fill and tie it, then use the bag as a washcloth or sponge while in the bath.

Create A Spa At Home

Steam is a great beauty tool. It can open pores, stimulate circulation, rectify skin tone, clean skin, and relax and relieve tired muscles. While a trip to a spa may be out of your price range, steaming at home is within anyone's means.

All you need to do is place some herbs in a bowl—

- ▶ Chamomile, rosemary, and thyme are great for cleaning and smoothing
- ▶ Peppermint and elder flower are used for tightening
- ▶ Yarrow can be used for drying

Pour boiling water over the herbs in the bowl. Place your face off to one side of the bowl (not directly over it) and make a tent over your head with a large towel. Steam for ten minutes and then gently blot skin dry with a clean towel. Apply an astringent, such as witch hazel or water mixed with a few drops of cider vinegar—or rub skin gently with a lemon or slice of raw potato. Then, moisturize as usual to lock in all of the beneficial water your skin has just been hydrated with.

Keep in mind: your bathroom can be turned into a steam room if you want more skin than just your face to glow.

Turn the shower on to hot and close all doors and windows tightly. Be careful to avoid touching the water. Remember to keep small children and pets away, and consult your physician if you have any health problems.

Make Skin Glow

If the steam method is not exactly your cup of tea, why not try a mask? You can use natural ingredients along with softened water to create a wonderful one. First, cleanse and freshen your face; and blend in a moisturizer lightly. Splash skin with warm water, and then apply your choice of:

- ▶ Mashed cucumber
- ▶ Beaten egg white with a drop of lemon juice (especially good for normal to oily skins)
- ▶ Egg yolk mixed with a few drops of cider vinegar and vegetable oil (excellent for dry skin)
- ▶ Two tablespoons honey with a few drops of lemon juice or cider vinegar
- ▶ One teaspoon brewer's yeast made into a paste with two teaspoons warm water

Relax for fifteen minutes while the mask dries and is working its magic, then rinse off thoroughly. Blot your skin dry and reapply moisturizer. Your skin will glow. And, as with a steam bath, a mask can be used for your whole body—not just for your face.

Keep Hair In Top Condition

Shampooing with soft water will leave your hair clean and smooth with a lustrous shine—and you will need less shampoo to accomplish these results. Also, more manageability is another result of using softened water to shampoo.

People who use hair coloring will especially want to consider using soft water. Those going from darker to lighter shades may find that their hair turns an orange color if they use hard water. This is the result of metals such as iron and copper mixing with the coloring solution. To correct this problem, use softened, distilled, or filtered water for washing your hair.

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If your hair is dry from sun exposure or continual use of heated styling tools such as blow dryers, curling irons and hot rollers—you might want to do a home hot oil treatment. Simply massage two tablespoons of warmed olive oil into your scalp. Wrap your head in a towel that has been rinsed in hot water. After a few minutes, wet hair thoroughly and work a small amount of shampoo through hair to create a lather. Rinse with soft water: first with warm, then with cool. The rinse process is the real key—make sure you rinse until the water is clear to make sure all of the shampoo and olive oil have been removed.

If you want to accentuate natural highlights, add the following to your rinse water: red heads can try a few teaspoons of vinegar, blondes may add lemon juice. For darker hair, pour a pint of boiling water over two tablespoons of rosemary and let the mixture seep for half an hour. Strain it, then use the liquid to rinse clean hair. All hair colors can add shine from a solution made by boiling parsley in water for 20 minutes. The strained liquid should then be used as a rinse.

Finally, here are some other things to keep in mind when keeping hair in top-notch condition. Remember: never brush wet hair. Instead towel dry, then work through hair with a wide-toothed comb. Also, hair colorings and permanent waves may not take as well if your home uses hard water instead of soft.

Keep In Mind

Water does an excellent job of beautifying skin and hair from the outside, but it is also important to remember that what happens on the inside of your body has a great deal to do with how you look



on the outside. Drinking plenty of water, six to eight glasses each day is recommended, will help keep your skin glowing and your body hydrated.

Also, drinking plenty of water keeps

your kidneys functioning properly so that they can flush excess water out—which can actually help alleviate water retention. It is an interesting paradox that the easiest way to rid excess retained water is to drink even more water.

Sun, salt water, and chlorine can take a toll on your skin and hair. To help alleviate the damage, always take a tepid to cool shower to rehydrate skin and remove residue from hair after a day at the beach or pool. Follow with conditioner for your hair and moisturizer for your body.

Short of surgery, nothing can remove wrinkles. But there is a way to “plump” up the skin to make them less noticeable. Lather on a cold cream-base soap and scrub (but not too vigorously) with a washcloth for one or two minutes. Rinse with warm water, blot dry, and blend in moisturizer. Or, mix heavy cream with a handful of strawberries in a blender, combine with petroleum jelly (in equal portions to the cream), and apply to the skin as a mask. Rinse off after 20 minutes and you will see the strawberries have acted to leave cheeks looking rosy and skin feeling smoother.

Improve Your Water Quality

Water is the universal solvent. It picks up some of everything it touches, which is why it cleans so efficiently. During the Industrial Age, water quality deteriorated because pollution increased and readily available sources of water decreased. Impurities were abundant, and the color, taste, and odor of water were immensely changed.

The advent of widespread municipal treatment solved many of the health problems that plagued society. But, municipally treated water and water drawn from wells may still have many aesthetic problems (taste, color, odor, etc.) or have excessive levels of hardness. Nationally, eight out of ten homes do not have naturally soft water. Hard water, with all of its minerals, keeps soap from lathering as it should, working as it ought to, and rinsing as you would like. Hard water leaves an invisible film on skin that blocks pores, and attracts and holds bacteria—which causes chapping, itchiness, and dryness.

Fortunately, water conditioning equipment is available to reduce the impurities that have tainted the waters. Water can be made to be clear to the eye, clean to the taste, and fresh to the smell. While having a water softener installed in your home is not an inexpensive undertaking, the paybacks come quickly in less wear-

and-tear on skin, hair, and clothes; decreased soap, shampoo, and detergent use; and longer lives for water-using appliances such as dishwashers, refrigerators, and washing machines. Also, using softened water can improve the taste and appearance of foods and beverages that require water use. Soaps and shampoos will again lather profusely; skin can once again glow, while soft and supple to the touch; and hair will shine and become more manageable.

Water softeners, also called cation exchange softeners, reduce calcium and magnesium. These minerals seriously impair water's cleaning capabilities and can deposit a damaging scale in plumbing pipes, fixtures, and water-using appliances. Water softeners can also reduce heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, barium, and naturally occurring radium if they are already in the water when it passes through the softener.

Softened water is an asset to your beauty and grooming routines and can be beneficial for many other daily activities, such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry, in your home as well. For more information on water softening and its benefits (or other water treatment options), please contact a Certified Water Specialist—or, write:

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WQA headquarters (above) telephone is: 708/505-0160. □

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