

strike it RICH

BENEFICIAL OILS FOR HAIR AND SKIN

Frizzy, fried, and coarse strands from all that fun in the sun are not a great start to autumn, and neither is blemished, dried out, or wrinkled skin. Fortunately, there are plant-based oils that can repair summer's damage and help us reclaim glowing skin and luxurious locks.

Saving face

It seems counterintuitive, but applying a small amount of oil to your face can give you a well-hydrated glow—without the shine and stickiness that come from using certain lotions.

If you've never used oils on your skin before, you'll be happy to know there are many with soothing and hydrating properties. Argan oil is one. An excellent hydrator, it helps fight free-radical damage and acne. Argan oil has developed a reputation as a beauty secret—it can help minimize lines, soften skin, and encourage a healthy glow.

Extra-virgin olive oil is another great choice for the face and body. Nourishing, stimulating, and softening, it contains antioxidants and healthy fats. It can even help reduce sun damage. Rosehip seed oil can be harder to find, but it too is an excellent hydrator, boasting a luxurious, silky feel.

Hair today, better tomorrow

Oils are a great choice when it comes to repairing fried and frizzled strands. Look for pure, organic plant oils labeled "pure cold-pressed" or "pure expeller-pressed."

One favorite is almond, a light and odorless oil rich in vitamins and protein. Another is coconut, which has long been used in folk medicine as a hair conditioner and moisturizing oil. Jojoba is a good choice for the scalp and hair, since it is very emollient and contains nutrients that benefit the skin.

If you're looking for an antioxidant-rich oil, sesame's a good bet. It works as both a moisturizer and a conditioner. To add a non-greasy sheen to your locks, reach for extra-virgin olive oil.

Treat your hair

One of the best ways to nourish and repair hair is with an oil treatment. They're easy to do; you don't even need to shampoo first.

When you've decided on an oil, mix 2 tablespoons of it in a bottle with a flip-up spout or in a cup. If you wish, add 15 to 30 drops of essential oil. For a hot oil treatment, place the container in hot water for a few minutes before applying. This warms the oil and enhances the hair's ability to absorb it. (You can also apply the oil unheated.)

Next, put some oil on your fingertips and rub it between your hands. Starting at the top front of the hairline, massage your scalp with small circular strokes, working back toward the crown. Add more oil as needed. Repeat this process from the temple area back to the lower crown and through the nape of the neck. Be gentle and thorough; massage the entire scalp (not just the top of the hair) for at least three minutes.

Add more oil to your palms. Work the oil between your hands and massage it into the rest of your hair with a gentle, stroking motion. Cover your hair with a plastic shower cap or recycled plastic bag. To maximize the moisturizing effect, wrap a hot, damp towel around the plastic. Leave for 20 to 30 minutes, and then rinse the oil out with shampoo. Follow with conditioner. Any leftover oil makes a great moisturizer for your skin. TFL

SELECTED SOURCES

Naturally Healthy Hair by Mary Beth Janssen (\$16.95, Storey, 1999) ■ *No More Dirty Looks* by Siobhan O'Connor and Alexandra Spunt (\$14.95, Da Capo, 2010)