

How to buy organic cosmetics

SKINCARE
MANUFACTURERS
HAVE JOINED THE
ORGANIC MOVEMENT,
BUT HOW DO YOU
KNOW IF WHAT YOU
ARE BUYING IS TRULY
ORGANIC? BY Joanna Hall

In recent years, enthusiasm for all things organic has grown. More consumers are turning to organic foods and alternative therapies in their quest for wellbeing, and for many people that also includes how they care for their skin.

Brands such as The Body Shop and Aveda first introduced the concept of plant-based, eco-friendly products back in the 1970s. However, in the past 15 years, an increasing number of dedicated organic skincare and cosmetic manufacturers have joined the party.

Sharon McGlinchey, a skin therapist and founder of cult skincare brand MV Organic, says one reason for the move is a growing awareness of the potential issues surrounding the chemicals found in some skincare products, even those marketed as "all natural".

"After almost 15 years as a skin therapist specialising in skin sensitivity, it became apparent, [in] treating people who came to me as a last resort, that even 'all natural' was not the answer," McGlinchey explains. "Most had tried natural brands without success."

ALL NATURAL?

McGlinchey says the chemical and pesticide residue in the natural raw materials used in some natural products is one of the issues. "Also, there's the fact that many 'natural' brands still use petrochemicals, as well as irritating synthetics, perfumes, preservatives and alcohol to bolster shelf life. None of these are helpful to those people with true sensitivities and compromised skin."

Sensitive skin aside, more people are choosing to use organic skincare. It's a market that has undoubtedly come of age, with increasingly sophisticated products now on offer.

But the issue remains: how do you know if a product is truly organic?

In recent years, a number of organic certification bodies have been established worldwide to improve the regulation and credibility of organic products. In most cases, however,

ORGANIC SKINCARE CHECK LIST

Judith White says there are five things to remember when buying organic products.

- 1 Make sure the products are certified by a reputable organisation.
- 2 Look for results-based products that stand by their marketing claims.
- 3 Check the percentage of certified organic ingredients in each product - if it is under 95 per cent it does not comply with the Australian Organic Standard.
- 4 Investigate the brand and its area of expertise.
- 5 Expect to invest in your skincare. You get what you pay for.

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BUYER BEWARE

White also agrees that buyers need to be very aware when purchasing organic skincare. "The word 'organic' alone bears no reference to certification," she says. "More often than not, it is a marketing claim that has no reference to the ingredients used nor the integrity of the product."

McGlinchey advises consumers to read product labels carefully. "The ingredient list speaks volumes," she says. "As long as you are familiar with Latin plant names, then you should easily be able to work out which ingredients are plant-based and which are synthetic, with the organic ones usually marked with an asterisk. As long as there are more plant-based ingredients than synthetic, that's a good start."