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Why You Should Consider Adding a Body Mask to Your Skin-Care Routine

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Skin... it exists in places other than the face! While we love slathering our mugs in serums, creams, and oils to make them look their best, there is a whole lot of skin on our bodies and it also deserves the same care and attention. If the rise in **body masking** is any indication, it seems that folks are starting to agree. "Body masks have become a huge trend recently as people have become aware of treating their bodies," shares Melissa Doft, M.D. a New York-based board-certified plastic surgeon. Concerns such as "acne, loss of collagen, fine lines, or discoloration," she shares, can also develop on the body as well as face, and more people are looking to address those concerns.

Though some folks might view doing a full-body mask as often as you do a face mask as a little bit extra, it's really not *that* ridiculous, if you ask London-based board-certified dermatologist Sophie Shotter: "Just because we spend most of our day with the rest of our skin covered up, it doesn't mean it shouldn't have some TLC." Amen and amen.

To find out more, we consulted dermatologists to help explain the benefits of body masking, which products to use, and which ingredients to consider before you cover your extremities in some glorious gunk.

What is body masking and what can it do for my skin?

Ultimately, body masks function in the same way face masks do for your skin. "They're nothing more than face masks for the skin below the neck," says Dr. Marina Peredo, M.D., a New York City-based board-certified dermatologist. "They normally come in a larger size container to be spread across your arms, legs, chest, butt, etc."

It's important to establish that the practice isn't anything new. Traditional body rituals such as bathhouses and bathing in mineral pools can be found in different cultures across the world. In modern times, body masking is a very self-care-focused practice, but it's also got its practical uses.



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HERE "A body mask can help with acne, keratosis pilaris, hyperpigmentation, and sun damage, and chronically dry skin," explains Karen Fernandez, an aesthetician in California, Washington, and Texas. "Some masks are formulated to exfoliate and brighten while others will soften and hydrate." They also happen to be a bit cheaper than booking an entire spa session.

Brands like fan-favorite Frank Body have already been on this kick. Since 2013, it's offered an assortment of masks, scrubs, and oils meant to be used on your extremities. "Body breakouts [happen] because of the oil, dirt, and sweat trapped in your pores," brand cofounder Jess Hatzis tells *Allure*.

And doctors agree. "I have seen a surge in both facial and body acne during this pandemic. Acne has been one of the most common complaints in my practice recently," New York City-based, board-certified dermatologist Claire Chang, M.D., previously told *Allure*. The buttocks, Chang further explains, are a common area for breakouts, "due to irritation from sweating and

tight-fitting clothes. Legs can be prone to acne after shaving due to irritation around hair follicles."

Is the skin on your body different from the skin on your face?

Face skin is thinner than that on our bodies. In the same vein, body skin also has fewer sebaceous glands, making it less oily. "The biggest difference is that the skin on your face is normally thinner than the skin on your body," Dr. Peredo says. "Also, skin cell turnover rate is slower on the body than the face, often resulting in drier, thicker, and scallier skin in those areas."

Because of this difference, body masks have to be formulated accordingly. "[They will] incorporate larger exfoliating particles (for physical exfoliation) as well as higher potencies of certain exfoliating acids," Danville, California-based board-certified dermatologist Samantha Ellis, M.D. adds. Despite the similar ingredients in their formulations, it isn't advised to use a body mask on your face. "Body masks can be formulated with ingredients of a higher potency, so they are often not recommended for use on the face," says Hatzis.

How to choose the right mask

Finding the perfect blend of ingredients is key to getting the most benefits out of your mask, but first, identify the issue you want to address. Acne-prone folks should be on the lookout for ingredients with antibacterial and detoxifying benefits like retinol and azelaic acid, says Dr. Peredo. Clay-based masks, like ones made with bentonite or kaolin have those detoxifying properties you're looking for.

If dry skin is your issue, "look for a body mask that has hydrating benefits with ingredients like shea butter or hyaluronic acid," Dr. Peredo suggests. "If you have dry, cracked hands from the cold weather, try a hand mask with ceramides to moisturize." For hyperpigmentation, niacinamide and kojic acid are a boon with their discoloration-fading capabilities. For fine lines and wrinkles, hyaluronic acid and humectants are key, notes Dr. Doft. If the skin is inflamed or sensitive, then Dr. Ellis advises implementing "anti-inflammatory ingredients that can include compounds like green tea, *Centella asiatica*, and colloidal oatmeal."

All in all, as the experts outlined, if you're looking for added hydration, introducing humectants such as glycerin, urea, hyaluronic acid, and glycolic acid, is your best bet. For smoothing and brightening the skin, look for exfoliating acids such as lactic acid and glycolic acid. Physical exfoliants such as clay and niacinamide can also be your BFF for improving hyperpigmentation.

Body masking with a skin condition

As great as masking can be for your body, if you've got a skin condition such as eczema or acne, proceed with caution. "I think it's always important for a patient to check with their treating dermatologist to ensure that a product will not exacerbate their underlying issue," says Dr. Ellis.

"You should be cautious when using a mask if you have any skin conditions in order not to cause flare-ups," Dr. Peredo warns. This is especially true if you're working with masks that contain exfoliating acids or potentially harsh actives.



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That said, there are definitely some ingredients you *can* use that can help soothe some of those chronic skin issues we just mentioned. For eczema, "use ingredients like coconut oil as it easily penetrates the skin and moisturizes," **Terrie Absher**, medical aesthetician and founder of Total Glow spa in Menlo Park, California suggests. "Some of the other ingredients I love using for body masks that we also use at our spa are gotu kola, yogurt, colloidal oatmeal, turmeric, and aloe vera – they are wonderful for calming, soothing, and moisturizing the skin."

Lipids are actually key for treating things like eczema and psoriasis, according to Los Angeles-based aesthetician and dermatological nurse, Natalie Aguilar. "Products that are rich in lipids, ceramides, and probiotics can help strengthen the skin's microbiome," she explains. "It's a defense layer and provides it with a hydrating barrier that prevents further TEWL (transepidermal water loss)." Los Angeles-based aesthetician Joshua Ross suggests fragrance-free masks if you've got eczema, as the scents may irritate your skin. Stay away from retinoids and glycolic acid, too.

Acne sufferers, look for a mask with salicylic acid in it, Fernandez advises. "If the skin is dry with acne look for a gel-based mask, while oily skin will benefit from a clay-based mask," she says, stressing to take care that you're not using anything potentially comedogenic (pore-clogging).

How often should you be masking?

Dr. Ellis recommends masking weekly or biweekly. **Absher** says that masks can be done one to three times a week, depending on the kind of mask you're using. If it's for moisturizing, you can use it more frequently, but if it's something more specific, you should probably use it less often. The good news is, most masks come with instructions — follow them, and also talk to your dermatologist about what would work best for your skin.

How to incorporate body masking into your routine

In order to get the most out of your body mask, you absolutely must cleanse your skin first. Ideally, you'd be applying the body mask in the shower, as the steam that accumulates can help open up your pores. **Absher** likes to kick things off with a little gentle exfoliation in the area you will be applying your mask. Try starting with a dry brush, as Aguilar suggests. Then, scoop out as much product as you need and slather it on for as long as directed.

"Usually, you will use the body mask either right before your shower (apply 10 to 15 mins before and rinse off in the shower) or right after your shower when skin is soft and permeable (this will require a second shower to rinse off)," Aguilar says.

You also don't have to use *only* one mask per session. Just as you can multimask on your face, you can do the same on your body. Just apply the different mask types to the areas as needed. It's a custom approach that Fernandez enjoys. "You could do two masks in some cases – like an exfoliating mask followed by a hydrating mask," though she warns against using two "active" masks at once so as not to irritate the skin.

Try These Body Masks

Now that you've got the rundown, you're well on your way to keeping your body's largest organ looking and feeling like a million bucks. To get you started, consider Kopari's Pink Soufflé Body Mask, which contains niacinamide to minimize your pores, as well as kaolin and bentonite clay to purify your skin.

It's also got dragonfruit "to deliver antioxidants that fight free radical damage and coconut oil to soothe, soften, and hydrate the skin," notes board-certified Los Angeles-based board-certified dermatologist Ava Shamban, M.D. Coco & Eve's Bounce Body Masque is made with

antioxidant-rich mango fruit extract to promote an even skin tone and fig extract that fights the free radicals that may come in contact with your skin.

Curie's Clay Detox Mask is formulated specifically to use on your face, or — stay with us — under your arms. Kaolin clay draws out dirt and oil that contribute to body odor, promising to extend the time it takes for them to eventually start, well, smelling like an underarm.

For your little piggies, Minneapolis-based board-certified dermatologist Jenny Liu, M.D., suggests the fan-favorite Baby Foot Original Exfoliation Foot Peel. Formulated with chemical exfoliants like salicylic and lactic acids, "it helps to get rid of callous skin that builds on the feet over time," she says.

Do yourself a favor: grab a drink (alcoholic or otherwise), light a candle, put on some music or a podcast, and get to masking. Your skin — and possibly your mental health — will be better for it. After all, we could all use a little pampering in times like these.

<https://www.allure.com/story/how-to-use-body-masks>