

Elina Fedotova on The Power of Probiotics for the Skin

SUBMITTED BY CHARLENE HANDEL

Elina Fedotova, CEO of Elina Organics, has been sharing her unique passion for natural skin care since immigrating to the U.S. in 1991. She deeply believes that holistic beauty treatments and natural skin care products can deliver dramatic and long-lasting results, without the health risks associated with surgical face-lifts and other invasive procedures.

In her laboratory, she personally creates her skin care products by hand, including her probiotic-rich line of products aimed at nourishing and healing the skin. While the subject of introducing probiotics to one's skincare routine may just now be hitting mainstream media, Fedotova maintains that it's been a holistic skincare tradition for centuries. "People have applied face masks from yogurt, kefir and kombucha tea to help heal and beautify their skin," she says. "In the past, people had no idea that the reason fermented foods and beverages work is because they contain friendly microorganisms. Today, science confirms that these beneficial microbes offer a host of benefits to the skin and entire body."

You mention that the use of probiotics is gaining momentum in the skincare industry.

It's definitely gaining momentum. And fortunately, it's a trend that's here to stay—one that has come full circle in the professional, 21st-century skin care industry. Even popular over-the-counter brands are joining the microbe marketplace by putting probiotics in their products.

How do probiotics help the skin?

Probiotics come in various forms and varieties and, when implemented into a skin care regimen or treatment, can provide many healing effects on the skin. While most people are familiar with the concept of a community of microorganisms in their digestive system called a microbiome, they're not as familiar with the skin microbiome. However, the skin, the body's largest organ, plays host to various strains of bacteria, fungi and viruses, as well. A harmonious balance of these microbe colonies is one of the keys to healthy skin. If it's out of balance, the skin's immune system and protective barrier can be compromised.

What is the biggest challenge for skin care formulators who use probiotics in their products?

To have a shelf life, skincare products need preservatives—which kill bacteria, even good bacteria. So, the biggest challenge is finding a way to preserve them. If a skincare formula has probiotics and preservatives in it, the bacteria is most likely dead, which is not helpful.

To be able to preserve the beneficial bacteria is an art. One way to ensure that bacteria is still alive is to introduce prebiotics as food for the probiotics. Another way is to encapsulate the bacteria, so it stays dormant in the capsule. This is the method I use in my skincare line. Once you blend the product with water, it activates the bacteria.

How do you know if you're getting "the real deal" when you go for a facial or skin peel?

If a skincare specialist uses freshly fermented beverages, like kombucha, as an alternative to chemical peels, you know they are using live probiotics. Kombucha contains multiple species of yeast and bacteria, along with organic acids and active enzymes. It gently exfoliates and treats the skin with a mild pH of three and contains an effective cocktail of acetic, butyric, lactic and malic acids. It works very well for all complexions, especially for rosacea-prone and sensitive skin.

A fresh probiotic mask can also be made by mixing yogurt, kefir and honey in equal proportions. Surprisingly, a study looking for probiotics in 13 samples of different types of commercially available honey uncovered 32 naturally-occurring strains of lactobacillus and six of them were lactobacillus acidophilus. Lactobacillus produces lactic acid on the skin, which helps to hydrate and brighten it. These microorganisms are also very effective for calming inflammatory skin conditions like acne and rosacea—both symptoms of an imbalanced skin microbiome.

Are most skin problems associated with skin microbiome problems?

If you have any major skin problems, it's usually connected to a disturbed microbiome—which just means there is an imbalance of good to bad bacteria. The more good bacteria you introduce, the more you crowd out the bad bacteria and increase your skin's health.

Probiotics are a very efficient way to nurture, heal and protect the skin. They promote a desirable complexion when applied topically and when taken internally, as well. Topical probiotics combined with a whole, fresh diet with limited sugar intake and an abundance of fermented foods and beverages can leave one's skin healthy and glowing.

Charlene Handel, founder of Skin Fitness, Etc., located at 5650 El Camino Real, Ste. 230, in Carlsbad, carries Elina Organics products, including her new probiotic makeup line, and offers anti-aging, hydrating facials featuring cultured probiotics, cocoa chocolate, rose petals and sea pearls. For more information, call 760-438-4600, email Charlene@SkinFitnessEtc.com or visit SkinFitnessEtc.com. For more information on Elina Organics, visit ElinaOrganics.com.