

First step: cleansing

Traditional wisdom is a dynamic resource, adapting to new conditions as it passes down through the generations. Indian families who move to other countries often modify their age-old recipes to suit what they have to hand, replacing ingredients that are hard to find outside India with others that are easily obtainable, including essential oils.

You can turn your kitchen cupboard into a beauty treasure-trove, as practically all the ingredients needed for the following recipes are used in everyday Indian cookery. All are available from Asian stores, and most can be found in supermarkets.



△ Oils to suit your skin, from left: almond for all complexions, sesame for dry, sunflower for oily.

cleansing cream

The best oils for cleansing are almond, sesame and sunflower. Alternatively, you can use this light cream cleanser.

Ingredients

- 7.5 ml/1/2 tbsp beeswax
- 30 ml/2 tbsp coconut oil
- 30 ml/2 tbsp almond oil
- 60 ml/4 tbsp cucumber juice (or water)
- 1.5 ml/1/4 tsp borax
- 15 ml/1 tbsp witch hazel
- few drops rose water

ALLERGY ALERT

Before applying any cosmetic to your face, test it on your inner arm, leaving it for as long as you intend to leave it on your face. If any redness or irritation develops, wash off the mixture at once and discard it.

▷ **Ingredients for an ubtan (clock-wise from front):** ground coriander, liquorice sticks, besan, ground cumin and ground fenugreek.



Melt the beeswax in a non-metallic bowl over a pan of hot water, and add the oils. In a separate bowl, heat the cucumber juice and borax (a good natural emulsifier) until the borax is completely dissolved. Add the witch hazel and remove from the heat. Combine the contents of the two bowls and allow to cool a little, then add the rose water. Beat the mixture until it cools and thickens.

herbal ubtan

This a traditional Indian cleanser. Many different blends are possible, but all have gentle softening and cleansing effects.

Ingredients

- ground coriander
- ground cumin
- ground fenugreek
- ground liquorice
- besan (chickpea flour)

Mix together equal quantities of all of the ingredients and then store your mixed powder in a clean and airtight container. You will need about a small handful for one treatment. The dry base blend should be mixed to a paste consistency with the appropriate liquid ingredient for immediate use whenever it is needed.

- For oily, combination or blemished skin, mix the base blend to a paste with yogurt or diluted lemon juice.
- For dry or mature skin, mix the ubtan with milk or cream.
- For normal skin, or if the other combinations feel too sticky, mix with water or rose water.

Mix to a smooth, soft paste, then rub it into your skin – gently for dry vata or sensitive pitta complexions – using small circular movements. Massage off with warm, followed by cool, water.



△ If you've made more than you need for a facial, why not give your feet and legs a treat too?