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Treatments

Cool As A Cucumber

BY AMERICAN SPA STAFF
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Cucumbers have been consumed in healthy eating regimens and used in beauty products for decades. They originated in India and spread to many other countries, including China, England, France, Greece, and the U.S. Over the years, cucumbers have been used for a variety of purposes due to their many benefits, but it is their high water content that makes them great for use in spas. Their hydrating, cooling, and soothing attributes are beneficial for problem skin, and their high-fiber, low-calorie makeup make them a healthy snack.

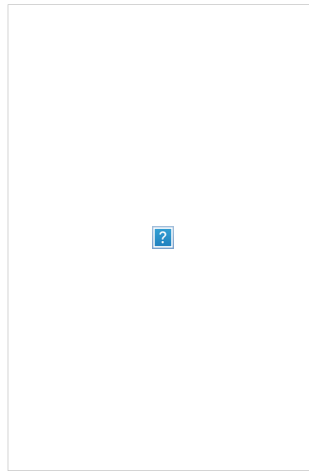
According to Lisa Polley, director of education and business development for Jurlique, cucumbers are loaded with B vitamins—B1, B2, B3, B5, B6—and folic acid. “The skin on the cucumber is mostly water, but it also contains ascorbic acid (vitamin C) plus caffeic acid—these nutrients help soothe skin irritations and reduce swelling,” says Polley. “This is the primary reason that cucumbers are an ideal spa ingredient for use internally—in shakes, smoothies, and water—as well as topically.” Cucumbers also contain silica and vitamin C, both important nutrients for skin health. Additionally, they have been recognized as a tonic for acneic, red, and irritated skin.

COOLA founder and CEO Chris Birchby notes that cucumbers soothe skin irritations, prevent water retention, and are rich in water, fiber, and beneficial minerals. “Cucumbers and the skin share the same levels of hydrogen, so it becomes easy for cucumbers to mask all the problem areas,” he says. “It has been proven that cucumbers contain anti-inflammatory properties to reduce redness and eye puffiness.”

The caffeic acid that is naturally found in cucumbers helps to reduce puffiness and water retention in the skin. Because the skin around the eyes is the thinnest, that is where water retention is most prevalent and visual. Jurlique offers two products with cucumber extract: Purely Age-Defying Eye Cream and Herbal Recovery Eye Cream to reduce the appearance of swelling and puffiness in the delicate eye area. In terms of treatments, frozen cucumber slices are a great eye soother. Polley suggests layering them over a gauze butterfly eye patch during a mask treatment. Once the mask is removed, apply an eye cream with cucumber extract to continually soothe and hydrate.

Birchby also thinks a cucumber mask is a great way to reduce oily shine, and it’s easy to make. Coarsely chop half of a peeled cucumber, place in a blender, and blend until smooth. Apply liberally to the face, and leave on for 15 minutes. Rinse with cool water, and pat the face dry.

Tammy Pollino, owner of KaLu Salon and Day Spa (Amherst, NY) notes that Amber Products offers a Cucumber Gel Mask, as well as a cucumber-infused paraffin, which can be used in hand, foot, and body treatments. “A full-body paraffin cocoon is fun and unique,” she says. “We apply strips dipped in paraffin to the entire body and then wrap clients in a thermal blanket and cover them with a wool blanket.” The moist heat from the paraffin has tons of benefits, including hydrating, detoxifying, and soothing skin, and the blankets help to maintain the heat for a longer period of time.



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About the Author

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In terms of promoting cucumbers in products, treatments, and spa cuisine, Polley suggests creating “healing” or “curing” themes, such as Jet Lag Services, New Year’s Relief, Party Cure Relief, Summer Sunburn and Windburn Soothers, and Energizing Makeovers. “These are themes that

work great when promoting a product or service that contains cucumber extract,” she says. “In addition, body treatments that are considered ‘detox services’ are ideal to promote the use of cucumbers.”

While cucumbers have many positive attributes, they also present some disadvantages. Polley notes that although cucumbers are a great way to add fiber to the diet, they are also known to have diuretic and laxative effects when taken internally, so use caution when adding cucumbers in abundance. Birchy adds that some people might also be allergic or sensitive. “A cucumber allergy is actually what experts call cross-reactivity, where pollen intolerances are mimicked by the fruits and vegetables that can lead to allergic reactions.”

The benefits, however, make cucumbers a favorite among spa-goers. As Birchy explains, a deflated balloon is wrinkly and flabby, but a full water balloon is tight and firm. The same analogy applies to skin cells. When they are adequately hydrated, they look firm and smooth. When they are dehydrated, skin can become slack. Cucumbers are 90-percent water and thus can help the body and skin remain properly hydrated.

Pollino adds that spring and summer are great times of the year for cucumber treatments and products, because people are looking for relief from dull, dehydrated skin. Guests want something that is going to leave skin glowing and hydrated, and cucumbers are the perfect solution.—Judy Koutsky

Help clients achieve fresh skin with these cucumber-infused products.

Amber Products Cucumber Masque: Formulated with allantoin, aloe vera, and cucumber extract, this soothing gel mask increases skin’s suppleness by enhancing water retention in cell tissues. www.amberproducts.com

Bioelements Multi-Task Eye Creme: This cream is made with brightening antioxidants, beta glucan, Chinese herbs, cucumber, lipoic acid, pigment lighteners, and shea butter to combat dark circles, ease puffiness, and moisturize the entire eye area. www.bioelements.com

Christina Cosmeceuticals Unstress Comfort Cleansing Mousse: This non-irritating mousse combines arnica, cucumber, and saponaria leaf extracts with pro-vitamin B5 for gentle daily cleansing. www.christina-usa.com

COOLA Face SPF 30 Mineral Sunscreen Cucumber: This daily sunblock blends borage seed oil extracts, cucumber, shea butter, and other natural ingredients to provide UVA/UVB protection while hydrating the skin. www.coolasuncare.com

Dermastart Inc. AM/PM Hydrating Masque: Ideal for drastic climates, this mask is infused with hyaluronic acid, stress-resisting botanical extracts, and vitamins to nourish, replenish, and hydrate skin. www.dermastart.com

Elemental Herbology Skin Drink: Ideal for after-sun use, this body hydrator contains aloe vera, cucumber, green tea, and other natural ingredients to calm and moisturize the skin. www.elementalherbologyus.com

Éminence Organic Skin Care Cucumber Eye Gel: Made with cucumber and active herbal ingredients, this eye gel provides instant soothing relief to puffy and stressed eyes. www.eminenceorganics.com

êshave Cucumber Shaving Cream: Soothing as it moisturizes, this shaving cream is packed with cucumbers to reduce swelling and calm irritated skin. www.eshave.com

GiGi Hair Removal Cream for the Face: Formulated with aloe vera and cucumber, this cream gently removes unwanted facial hair while cooling and moisturizing. www.gigispa.com

gloProfessional glo therapeutics Clear Anti-Blemish Cleanser: This cleanser contains cooling chamomile and cucumber to calm the skin, while benzoyl peroxide eliminates bacteria that causes acne. www.gloprofessional.com

GlyMed Plus Facial Hydrator: Formulated with a blend of arnica, cucumber, green tea, ivy, and red sandalwood, this lightweight botanical hydrator tightens pores, helps accelerate cell renewal, and controls the effect of rosacea and acne. www.glymedplus.com

G.M. Collin Phytoaromatic Gommage: Perfect as a mask or exfoliant, this facial treatment combines botanical and cucumber extracts and essential oils to purify, balance, and nourish the skin. www.gmcollin.com

Guinot Paris Anti-Fatigue Eye Gel: Designed specifically for the delicate eye area, this gel combines cucumber, horse chestnut, and ivy extracts to prevent dark circles, seal in moisture, and calm the skin. www.guinotusa.com

HydroPeptide Cleansing Gel Gentle Cleanse Tone Makeup Remover: This multitasking face wash blends calendula, chamomile, cucumber, stimulating peptide, and sebacic acid to fight

lines and acne while reducing redness and inflammation. www.hydropeptide.com

Jane Iredale—The Skin Care Makeup Active Light Under-Eye Concealer: Formulated with buckwheat wax, cucumber, and white tea extract, this concealer hides under-eye shadows while brightening the eye area. www.janeiredale.com

Murad Clarifying Toner: Made with cucumber and a refreshing blend of botanicals, this toner eliminates excess oil and restores balance to acne-prone skin. www.murad.com

OPI Manicure Pedicure Cucumber Massage Lotion: A blend of soothing cucumber, antioxidant pineapple extracts, vitamins, and emollients provide an ideal manicure and pedicure massage. www.opi.com

Pevonia Balancing Combination Skin Cream: This cream contains aloe to moisturize, heal, and hydrate; arnica to balance; cucumber to retain moisture; and tocopherol to soften and soothe skin. www.pevonia.com

Repêchage Hydra Soleil Deep Relief Tea Gel: This cooling gel is made with aloe vera; cucumber; green, white, and red tea; and seaweed to instantly nourish and hydrate sun-exposed skin. www.repechage.com

Rhonda Allison Cucumber Spritz: This face-and-body spray contains cucumber and moisture-binding nutrients to freshen and revitalize the skin. www.rhondaallison.com

Sesha Skin Therapy Rejuvenating Anti-Wrinkle Mask: Packed with argireline; vitamins B, C, and E; cucumber; green tea; and botanical extracts, this mask smoothes fine lines and wrinkles and protects the skin from environmental stressors. www.seshaskin.com

Shira Esthetics Shir-Organic Pure Cucumber Eye Cream: This eye cream is rich in cucumber and vitamins A, C, and E to revitalize and soothe the skin around the eye area. www.shiraesthetics.com

Sothys Paris Normalizing Lotion: Made to restore skin's natural pH and promote healthy skin, this toner contains a blend of cucumber, St. John's wort, and witch hazel. www.sothys-usa.com

Wilma Schumann Soothing Toner: Designed to soothe and help balance pH on all skin

types, this toner is formulated with açai berry, aloe vera, chamomile, cucumber, pomegranate, and witch hazel. www.wilmaschumann.com

—Lisa Bruckenstein



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