

# Is Natural Better For Skin-Care Products?



Jeanette Pavini  
Reporting

(CBS 5) Denise Viera buys her face wash at a health-food store.

She uses lavender and tea-tree oil, because she believes that natural is better.

"I was able to read all the ingredients, so I knew there weren't any chemicals in it."

Denise is not alone. Last year, Americans spent some \$5 billion on natural or organic beauty care products. But what does "natural" or "organic" mean? The FDA has not defined either term for personal products, and that leads to misleading labels.

"A product could contain a very small amount of a botanical and it could still claim that it's natural," said Leah Wyar of Self Magazine.

You have to read the label carefully to find out what you are getting. Ingredients are listed in order of amount. If fruit extracts are important to you, make sure they are near the top.

"That just ensures that you're getting the most out of that ingredient," said Wyar.

But even if the ingredients are there, it doesn't mean they work, and "natural" isn't always the best treatment. Acne is a good example.

"The synthetic agents are far superior," said dermatologist Dr. Ken Howe. "These are quite benign, safe treatments that are also effective."

On the other hand, research shows that plant extracts are super antioxidants for the skin. Your botanical beauty cream may be a real wrinkle-buster. Soy, green tea, and echinacea are some of the most potent.

"That makes sense, because antioxidant chemicals were developed by these plants to protect them from damage from the sun," said Howe.

Experts say experimenting with natural and artificial products is the best way to find what works best for you. That's how Denise found the right soap.

"My face used to break out even more, and now it doesn't break out as much," she said.

You can find out more about the FDA policy on cosmetics at [www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/cos-pol.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/cos-pol.html).

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