

# Invest In Your Health

December 2012 Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

## Natural vs. Organic Products

What's the difference--and how can you tell?

Kathleen Neves

Now, more than ever, people are questioning what is being put into the skin care products they use. With terms such as "natural" and "organic" being used on all kinds of packaging, it's important to know not only what these terms really mean, but how they affect the way a product is labeled, the way ingredients are listed on the packaging, and the overall effectiveness of the product.

### Terms Defined

What exactly does it mean when a product is labeled "natural" or "organic"? In the broadest sense, a natural product is something that originated from a plant or animal

difference between products labeled "natural" and "organic" is the amount of regulation imposed by the government. The US government does not regulate natural skin care products, which means anything can be labeled or described as natural, regardless of what it contains or how it was produced. Organic products, however, are heavily regulated by the government.

### Organic Isn't Easy

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) sets strict regulations for organic products: how ingredients must be grown and processed; where the word organic can appear on the product label; and how the label may be presented on



Check the labels and know what they mean to buy organic.

source, and an organic product is a natural product that was grown without the use of artificial fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides. Many ingredients used in beauty, makeup, and skin care products are already derived from plant sources, but exact definitions vary.

the actual product. Growers must adhere to a special system of farming that maintains and replenishes the soil fertility without the use of toxic materials such as pesticides or fertilizers. Third-party certifiers appointed by the USDA enforce these regulations with annual inspections of organic farms and

In the world of skin care, the biggest

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*Everything you do can be done better from a place of relaxation.*  
*Stephen C. Paul*

-Chinese Proverb

### Office Hours and Contact

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processing facilities.

The National Organic Program (NOP) is a government agency that works with the USDA to help regulate the use of organic ingredients in skin care products, and to make sure these types of products are correctly labeled. There are four labeling categories for certified organic products:

- 100 PERCENT ORGANIC

Products that have been certified by the government as containing 100 percent organic ingredients. The product is permitted to display the USDA Organic label on the front of the packaging.

- ORGANIC

Products that contain at least 95 percent organic ingredients. They are also permitted to bear the USDA Organic label on the front of their packaging.

- MADE WITH ORGANIC INGREDIENTS

Only 70 percent of ingredients need to be organic for a product to be certified in this category. These products cannot use the USDA Organic label, but are allowed to have descriptive text on the product label to say it is made with organic ingredients.

- LESS THAN 70 PERCENT ORGANIC INGREDIENTS

These products cannot use the USDA Organic label, and the only place where the word "organic" can be used on the product's packaging is in the ingredient list on the back of the product.

## What's Natural?

The main reason why the federal government doesn't regulate natural skin care products is because there is no formal definition of what natural means within the beauty industry. Different brands may use the word in completely different ways. This creates confusion and frustration for the consumer.

In May 2008, the Natural Products Association (NPA), along with brands such as Burt's Bees, JR Watkins, and Yes To Carrots, created the Natural Standard for Personal Care Products. This voluntary standard is the closest thing the beauty industry has to a formal definition of natural. It consists of the following four components:

- Natural. At least 95 percent of the

ingredients in the product must be formulated without any artificial ingredients, and minimally processed.

- Safety. The product must be completely void of any ingredients deemed harmful to human health by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

- Responsibility. The product cannot have been used in any sort of animal testing.

- Sustainability. The product, its ingredients, and its packaging must be environmentally friendly. Ingredients should be biodegradable, if possible. The product's packaging should be made up of recycled materials, or at least be easy for the consumer to recycle.

To use the NPA Natural Seal on its label, a product must meet all four components, and its manufacturer must disclose all ingredient information, fully and accurately. The NPA Natural Seal is

the closest equivalent for natural products to the USDA Organic label for organic products, but it is a voluntary standard that is neither required, nor endorsed, by the federal government.

While it's important to know the difference between natural and organic, it's no less important to make sure you're using the most suitable product. Just because a product is labeled "natural" or "organic" doesn't necessarily mean that it will be the best choice for your skin type, concerns, and conditions.

*Kathleen Neves is a licensed esthetician, makeup artist, and beauty blogger based in San Francisco.*



Finding the best product for you is often a struggle.

# Healthy Energy Boosters

## Tips to Staying Energized and Alert

Rebecca Jones

Here are some tips for keeping your energy levels up.

### Snack Smart

Strategic snacking can be a good way to smooth out dips in your energy level and avoid hunger cravings that can lead you to overeat. Go ahead and snack---just be as choosy in your snack selection as you are in meal planning.

### Grab an Energy Bar

Don't fall for the fiction that all so-called "energy bars" are unpalatable but good for you. A lot of energy bars are filled with chemicals and with sugar, so read labels, and look for high fiber, high protein, and limited carbs.

### Pick-Me-Up Snacks

Nuts such as almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, and hazelnuts are among the best choices for healthy, pick-me-up snacks, nutritionists say.

### Stay Hydrated

Even slight dehydration can leave you

tired and lethargic. The answer is, of course, to drink plenty of water. If the taste of plain water doesn't excite you, consider some of the flavored varieties, keeping in mind that loads of extra sugar should be avoided.

### Get Your Beauty Sleep

The number one myth about sleep is that you can get by on six hours a night, but the further away you deviate from getting eight hours sleep a night---and some people get too much, not too little---the greater the risk of cardiovascular disease, depression, obesity, and a host of other maladies.

### Avoid Caffeine, Get to Sleep

Caffeine is a great pick-me-up first thing in the morning, but it has a six- to seven-hour "half-life," meaning that half the caffeine in that cup of coffee you consumed to ward off the 3:00 p.m. doldrums will still be lingering in your bloodstream after the 10:00 p.m. news.

Rebecca Jones is a Denver-based freelance writer.



Stay hydrated to keep energy up.

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# Probiotics for Skin Health

## Trust Your Gut on This One!

Shelley Burns, N.D.

Digestive health plays an important role in how skin appears on the surface. When digestion is not working optimally, it allows toxins to be reabsorbed in the body instead of being eliminated. The body then mounts a state of emergency as it's overwhelmed by toxins, some of them bad bacteria. These manifest directly on the surface for all the world to see, in the form of wrinkles, blotchiness, skin rashes, and acne.

This is where probiotics come into play. Probiotics contain potentially beneficial bacteria found in the digestive tract---what some call good gut bacteria. They help strengthen the digestive system but they also play an important role in skin health. Probiotics consist of *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*, and *Bifidobacterium*

*bifidum*. They have anti-inflammatory, anti-pathogenic, and antiallergenic properties and can be used prophylactically and therapeutically.

There have been many studies showing benefits of probiotics to skin health. For example, there's a correlation between an imbalance of good and bad bacteria and the onset of acne. When bringing natural bacteria back into balance with a probiotic intervention, acne improves, in some studies, as much as 50 percent of the time.

There is no recommended daily intake for probiotics, but good food sources include buttermilk, kefir, miso, tempeh, yogurt, and other fermented foods. Supplements are generally higher in potency and are used for therapeutic purposes in treating irritable bowel

syndrome, Crohn's disease, colitis, and many other conditions.

While probiotics are essential for healthy skin and digestive health, there are many other appealing benefits to encourage their use, such as strengthening the immune system, replacing good bacteria after a course of antibiotics, and contributing to general health and well-being.

One note: Some probiotic supplements come from dairy sources and may not be suitable for individuals with dairy allergies or sensitivities.

*Sometimes the  
most important  
thing in a whole  
day is the rest we  
take between  
two deep  
breaths.*

-Etty Hillesum

Merry Christmas

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