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## Back to Basics

EXFOLIATING WITH CLAY FACIALS

by Myriam Liberman

**E**XFOLIATION is an extremely popular technique used in the skin care industry. A variety of techniques including lasers, medical peels, microdermabrasion, various light machines and creams are available to skin care professionals to help rejuvenate and cleanse clients' skin. These different processes work, but clients must be careful with home care so they don't overprocess skin, and pros must take care not to go too far with their exfoliations. Most people cannot endure aggressive exfoliations over an extended period of time because skin starts to become thinner, irritated and sensitive to the sun. ➤



photo: Scott Bryant for Hair Port Salon & Day Spa





photo: Scott Elyant for Hair Port Salon & Day Spa

*Unlike most exfoliation treatments, clay facials can treat many conditions such as severe acne, rosacea, sunburn, radiation- or chemotherapy-exposed skin, eczema and psoriasis.*

Skin sensitivity also happens because of medications such as Accutane, Retin-A and Adalpaline. Doctors routinely advise these patients not to undergo any kind of exfoliation because of the adverse, exaggerated reactions that could occur. But adverse reactions are not limited to those who take the aforementioned medications. They happen, too, with skin conditions such as sunburn, severe acne, rosacea, recent waxing, eczema and psoriasis. In addition, those who have had radiation and chemotherapy, are

advised not to undergo exfoliation treatments for the same reasons. So, what do you do with a person who may be sensitive to all of your exfoliating methods? Get back to basics. Break out some clay. A natural clay facial will gently exfoliate the skin and will not produce the redness or irritation that other treatments may.

### **The natural clay way**

It's ironic that "dirt" actually cleanses, but natural clay and water does cleanse skin. For centuries, American Indians used clays, water and herbs to clean their bodies. They had observed animals using water and clay soil to heal wounds and bathe their young.

The clay used in facials for sensitive skin should be mild, all natural and free of sulphur—this makes it suitable for all skin types. After being extracted from the earth, clay that is used for cosmetic purposes is cleansed of any impurities, such as rocks, leaves and other debris, and then purified. Some of the great minerals in clay include magnesium, calcium and iron, all of which help with the production of collagen in the skin. After the clay has been cleansed and dried, it has the consistency of talc powder, which is very soft and silky.

### **Benefits of a clay facial**

Clay is versatile. It can be used on almost all skin types, which is not the case with other skin treatments. Furthermore, for those who have clear skin, clay facials can help rejuvenate skin and rid the pores of any impurities. As the skin is exfoliated with clay, impurities from the skin are surfaced, pores shrink, and dead cells become finer. Mild clays can be applied around the eyes and lips, as well as the neck and décolleté. Additionally, mild clay can be applied up to five to seven times in one service, which is not the case with other similar skin treatments.

### **The procedure**

To do a clay facial, all you need is clay and water, which are combined into a creamy mixture. Gently apply the mixture to the entire face or body and carefully work it into the skin. Using the shape of the face, gently hold the facial muscles taut and with feather-like movements, your fingers will help exfo-  
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*Clay can help foster glowing, hydrated skin and provide relief from the flaking that is a typical characteristic of rosacea.*



liate the dead cells. There is no need to massage clay into the skin for deep penetration. In fact, avoid heavy massage when treating sensitive skin. Let the clay's minerals do the work on their own.

Clay can penetrate deeply to target skin problems. Logically, if the dermis is not healthy, then the skin condition will persist. But, if clay is applied several times in one service, it will yield noticeable results immediately—be sure you're using a mild clay and always follow manufacturers' instructions.

Once the clay has been completely absorbed into the skin, start your second application. At this point, the minerals of the clay draw out all of the skin's toxins and impurities. You can actually notice a difference in the color and texture of the skin after each application. Oftentimes, the healing minerals from the clay will not begin to penetrate the skin until after the second application, depending on the severity of the condition or problem. The cleaner the pores become, the deeper the clay will penetrate, which is why clay should be applied several times in one service.

Unlike most exfoliation treatments, clay facials can treat many conditions such as severe acne, rosacea, sunburn, radiation- or chemotherapy-exposed skin, eczema and psoriasis.

### **Severe acne**

Patients with acne, especially of the cystic type, generally cannot receive aggressive facial treatments because their skin is easily irritated and can even bleed. Clay can be used to treat these patients without complications, and can actually stop any bleeding. Most acne treatments use steam to open the pores before attempting to cleanse them, but this actually makes the pores more susceptible to dirt and bacteria. Without steam, clay's natural minerals remove all of the surface impurities and cleanse the pores without dilating them. After a couple of clay services, an acne client will notice a major reduction in redness, irritation and even scarring.

### **Rosacea**

Those with severe rosacea, whose skin is dry, red and flaky, will see dramatic results after their first clay treatment. For clients with this skin condition, clay exfoliates and reduces redness. Skin will go from red to a very pale

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pink as the dead cells are removed, naturally. Clay can also help foster glowing, hydrated skin and provide relief from the flaking that is a typical characteristic of these patients' skin. With continuous treatment, clay facials can help get the condition under control, and in many situations, has actually helped resolve problems associated with rosacea.

### **Sunburn**

Sulphur-free clay can be used to treat severe sunburns, as it calms skin and reduces redness, without causing further irritation or stinging. Apply a clay mask to an affected area to help heal the skin and prevent blisters from forming. Keep the mask moist so that its soothing, healing properties are released. The pain and redness will quiet down and the client will receive much-needed relief.

### **Cancer patients**

Clients who are receiving treatments for cancer, whether with radiation or chemotherapy, may also be treated with mild clay. Many people who receive these cancer treatments are left with gray or ashen skin. The skin also tends to become very thin and dry. Clay facials can help rehydrate the skin, exfoliate dead cells and help to bring back natural skin tones, ultimately restoring the skin's natural glow.

### **Eczema and psoriasis**

Eczema and psoriasis sufferers experience great relief with clay. It helps with flaky and itchy skin that tends to bleed easily. Again, dead skin cells are exfoliated, redness is reduced and the skin is calmed. Clay will actually help heal the skin lesions that these conditions cause.

### **Natural process**

Clay soothes skin. It's an ideal adjunct to current services or it can be used for a stand-alone service—even on irritated skin. Using clay is a back-to-basics technique that does produce results, but because clay is not aggressive, results are gradual. It is important to let the client know that each person is different and that skin improvement depends on the severity of the condition and home care. There are other ways to exfoliate skin—even the sensitive kind. ■

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