



## The Power of Pearl

With a growing number of pearl-based products on the market today, Fabienne Guichon-Lindholm, director of business development for Decl or and Carita, reveals the skin-saving benefits of mother-of-pearl.

**ANCIENT AND NATURAL INGREDIENTS CONTINUE** TO prove their worth and gain esteem with new research. As a result, they can often be found in today's latest skincare products. While many people associate pearls with beauty and opulence, very few are familiar with the astounding benefits they provide to the skin. The use of pearls in cosmetics and skincare products is not an entirely new practice, but it has seen a definite resurgence in the last few years, coinciding with increased pearl farming in Asia

and the Middle East. Pearl powder has been widely used by doctors and herbalists practicing traditional Chinese medicine for more than 2,000 years.

When applied externally, pearl powder rejuvenates the skin and speeds its natural metabolism, heals blemishes, minimizes large pores, and reduces redness. Pearl powder not only preserves youthful skin, but it also has healing properties that can treat certain diseases.

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### The Benefits of Pearl

When discovering the power of pearls, it is important to understand the difference between pearl powder and pearl essence. Pearl powder is a product derived from crushed mother-of-pearl and is used in anti-aging products, whereas pearl essence is an iridescent powder found in eye shadow and other makeup. Used as a beautifier, pearl essence is made from fish scales and doesn't actually contain any pearl, which is a helpful fact to know when your clients show pearl-related interest.

The composition of both mother-of-pearl and pearl is identical. Mother-of-pearl specifically refers to the inside lining of the shells of certain mollusks consisting of several layers of calcium and conchiolin, a protein closely resembling keratin. In a pearl, this same lining is formed when an irritating object, such as a parasite or a grain of sand, gets caught in the animal's soft tissue. As a result, the creation of a pearl comes from the buildup of layers of aragonite or calcite, crystalline forms of calcium held together with conchiolin.

The powerful benefits of pearls derive from their primary composition of calcium and conchiolin. Calcium salts contain essential minerals that

improve the skin's metabolism and promote cellular renewal, while conchiolin provides amino acids that maintain an ideal level of moisturization and increase the natural moisturizing factor (NMF) present in the skin.

### From a Historical Perspective

For thousands of years, Asian cultures, especially Chinese and Japanese, have relied on pearls as a natural remedy to preserve the appearance of young, bright skin and for healing and sun protection. Pearl powder was originally used by geishas under their stage makeup. Gradually, it came to be considered a powerful skincare product.

In traditional Chinese medicine, pearl powder is both ingested and applied topically. When ingested, this crystalline form of calcium also delivers essential minerals to the body and is believed to detoxify the system and regulate body function, including cleaning and clearing skin, adjusting body energy, calming the liver, relieving stress, regulating metabolism, and improving eyesight. It is believed that when taken during pregnancy or while breast-feeding, it will help speed up bone development and promote intelligence in babies. When used topically, pearl powder is reputed for softening and accelerating cell renewal.

### In the Here and Now

Mother-of-pearl is still used for medical purposes in natural, herbal, and Eastern medicine. In fact, pearl powder is documented as a medicine in the *Pharmacopoeia of the People's Republic of China* (Stationery Office, 2005) is an official compendium of drugs. The authors believe that the skin can absorb amino acids, calcium, and minerals from pearl powder.

In a study conducted at the Institute of Endocrinology at Zhejiang Medical University in China, powdered sea pearls, a combination of mother-of-pearl and fresh water pearls, demonstrated systemic anti-aging and toning actions. Other clinical studies in Japan and France have demonstrated that pearl powder can increase bone density and even bone formation. The healing properties of this unique ingredient are being researched, explored, and tested. However, it is not currently integrated or used in traditional Western medicine as we know it.

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The benefits of mother-of-pearl can be reaped on any area of skin that is in need of regeneration; however, it is generally found in facial and cosmetic products. It is often found in products targeting fine lines and wrinkles around the eyes and lips. For increased efficacy in skincare products, mother-of-pearl can be combined with other essential minerals such as copper, iron, magnesium sodium phosphorus, and zinc. The body does not produce minerals or trace minerals, therefore they need to be brought to the body in various forms, and this combination delivers a complete supply of vital ingredients to the skin.

The aging process slows the skin’s natural ability to regenerate. Mother-of-pearl, known for boosting cutaneous cellular renewal, delivers

essential minerals to the skin and helps accelerate this process. Consequently, mother-of-pearl now appears as an active ingredient in a variety of anti-aging products to diminish telltale signs of mature skin and leave skin looking refreshed and revitalized.—**Fabienne Guichon-Lindholm**

Born and educated in France, Fabienne Guichon-Lindholm has worked in the beauty industry for 20 years, earning a CIDESCO International Diploma. As director of business development for Decl or and Carita, she is responsible for researching emerging markets and creating training and marketing programs. Prior to joining Decl or and Carita, she founded Spa Source, a consultancy for resort and day spas. She can be reached at fgindholm@declor-us.com.

### Precious Pearl

The following are just a sample of modern products harnessing the ancient power of pearl today:

The Pearl of Youth collection from **Carita** features three products that help restore skin’s vitality and youth using pearl powder extracted from white mother-of-pearl. Pearl of Youth is an anti-aging day cream that firms, tones, and

smoothes the skin. Ideal for dry skin, Pearl of Youth Nutritive increases firmness and helps replenish moisture. Pearl of Youth Night helps repair, firm, and stimulate the skin’s essential functions at night. All three products feature a light creamy emulsion. [www.carita.com](http://www.carita.com).

Formulated for skin suffering from hyperpigmentation, **Comfort Zone’s** Absolute Pearl

collection includes Absolute Pearl Mask, Absolute Pearl Cream SPF 12, Absolute Pearl Light Concentrate, and Absolute Pearl

Corrector. The skin brightening line of products contain pearl powder to moisturize and revive skintone. (866) 328-4637; [www.comfortzone.it](http://www.comfortzone.it).

Including crushed mother-of-pearl as a key ingredient, **Guinot’s** After Sun Complex soothes and restores skin after exposure to the sun. It also calms redness and prolongs a tan. (212) 532-1030; [www.guinotusa.com](http://www.guinotusa.com).

In addition to nourishing shea butter and vitamin C, ingredients in **Pevonia’s** luxe Myoxy-Caviar line include youth-recovering pearl extract and Escutox for leaving clients’ skin radiant. The products—which include Timeless Balm Cleanser, Timeless Repair Cream, Timeless Repair Lotion, and Timeless Repair Serum—can be used for potent anti-aging spa treatments and can be retailed for effective at-home regimens. (800) PEVONIA; [www.pevonia.com](http://www.pevonia.com).

Perfect for mature, dry skin, **Pratima’s** Rejuvenating Pearl Cream is made from protein-rich pearl powder, which helps enhance skin-cell renewal, protect against environmental radicals, boost skin’s natural radiance, brighten skin, and help reduce trans-epidermal moisture loss. (212) 581-8136; [www.pratimaskincare.com](http://www.pratimaskincare.com). —**Heather Mikesell and Cristina De Oliveira**

