

Healthy Fat

Loaded with fatty acids and antioxidants, marula oil is a powerful ingredient

by Kris Campbell

Marula oil, with its powerful mix of antioxidants, skin-loving vitamins, and anti-inflammatory properties, is an ingredient you should have in your treatment room. Marula oil has a clear, light yellow color and nutty smell.

The oil can be used on its own as a cold-pressed, unrefined oil, or as an ingredient in skin and hair products. Marula oil comes from the marula tree (*Sclerocarya birrea*). The two main types of marula oil are the oil extracted from the hard shell of the nut and the oil extracted from the seeds.

WHAT'S IN IT?

Marula oil is a stable oil, as it has high levels of fatty acids rich in omega-3, -6, and -9. Marula oil's fatty acid composition includes:



Marula tree (*Sclerocarya birrea*)



Monounsaturated fatty acids: Oleic acid (omega-9) is a fatty acid that works as a penetration enhancer, increasing the skin's permeability. It appears to act selectively on the extracellular lipids representing the principal regulatory channel for the penetration of small molecules.

Polyunsaturated fatty acids: Linoleic acid (omega-6) is a fatty acid that lowers transepidermal water loss and increases skin moisture. It is part of the ceramide I, which is a barrier substance found in the horny layer of the skin. It may also help protect the skin barrier against cornification disorders.

Alpha-linolenic acid (omega-3) is a naturally occurring, colorless, polyunsaturated fatty acid liquid. Alpha-linolenic acid is a restorative ingredient and a skin conditioner.



Light in texture and weight, marula oil is a great option for those with various barrier function issues, as well as conditions like eczema and psoriasis.

Saturated fatty acids: When it is used in skin care products, palmitic acid is known to act as an emollient. It helps the skin retain moisture by forming an oily, water-blocking layer that slows the loss of water through the skin's surface. Many skin conditions, like psoriasis and eczema, see an improvement in dryness and flakiness with palmitic acid.

Stearic acid functions mainly as a surfactant, emulsifier, and thickener when added to cosmetics and personal care products.

Arachidonic acid (omega-6) is beneficial for improving wound healing and reducing inflammation.

USES

Aging skin: As we age, free-radical activity increases. Free radicals—which can come from environmental pollution, UV rays, and industrial chemicals—can cause oxidative stress on the body and, most important for us, the skin. Oxidative stress can lead to premature aging of the skin. Marula oil is far more powerful than the leading argan oil at fighting the free radicals that cause premature skin aging. The antioxidants in marula oil work to neutralize free radicals, alleviating the oxidative stress on the body.

Marula oil is also rich in vitamins C and E. It contains four times the amount of vitamin C as oranges, combating the damaging effects of free radicals that lead to visible signs of aging. Vitamin E tocopherols help fight free radicals as well, and reduce signs of photoaging.

Oily acneic skin: The skin absorbs this natural oil much quicker than other moisturizers, making it

perfect for those who battle acne breakouts. Its superior hydration properties help heal blemishes, and the antimicrobial and antibacterial properties can suppress the growth of acne-causing bacteria. Although it seems contradictory to add oil to already oily skin, marula oil is proven to be noncomedogenic as well as pH balanced.

Sensitive skin: Marula oil is beneficial to clients with sensitive skin conditions. Light in texture and weight, marula oil is a great option for those with various barrier function issues, as well as conditions like eczema and psoriasis. Marula oil also helps the healing process after such treatments as microdermabrasion, chemical peels, laser treatments, and surgeries.

Scalp and hair: This hair-friendly oil helps hydrate, protect, and defrizz the most stressed hair. Marula oil also has cellular regeneration and anti-inflammatory properties, which play a role in keeping the scalp healthy and boosting healthy hair growth.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

There are no specific, well-documented risks associated with marula oil. However, clients with nut allergies may also be allergic to marula oil. It is also an eye irritant.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Marula oil is a great natural ingredient for skin care, rich in antioxidants and omega-3, -6, and -9 fatty acids. It is naturally soothing, fast-absorbing, and suitable for all skin types, including oily, acneic, dry, aging, sensitive, and even compromised skin. ☺