

BEHIND THE MASK

SAM DHATT ON THE USE OF PUMPKIN IN RESULTS-ORIENTATED TREATMENTS

Patients love experiencing new treatments, especially ones which have a wonderful aroma, produce a great feeling while on the skin, and have positive results which are immediately visible and support their treatment goals. When chemists get all three of these properties formulated into one treatment product, they know they have an offering which will encourage patient return and loyalty, and one which will be placed permanently on office and medical spa reorder lists.

Pumpkin treatment masks have that triple attraction: they smell great, the patients feel like 'something's happening' when they are applied, and great results can be seen immediately when they are removed.

The pleasing aromas, the tingle, and the visible results produce an excitement in both the patient and the medical aesthetician right from the very first use. "My first patient with pumpkin was an acneic teenager," says Kristyn Smith, medical aesthetician, Cosmeti Care, Newport Beach, CA. "Within minutes of the first treatment, the skin had a more even tone and a very fresh appearance."

Smith uses this product on her acne patients in the plastic surgery offices where her company performs the cosmetic care. "It is results oriented, but with much less sting than the salicylic peel, an alternative that produces great results," she says.

The aroma of a pumpkin treatment is the natural, rich, spicy fragrance of pumpkin. Even

the colour demonstrates where the ingredients came from before being formulated into a skin-care product. It is a warm brownish-orange, just like the inside of a ripe pumpkin in autumn.

NATURAL INGREDIENTS

Pumpkin, *Cucurbita Pepo*, from the family Cucurbitaceae, is widely used in many cultures as a food. But it is also a good resource for the skincare industry as an ingredient for pre and post treatments, to fight ageing, and for treating and preventing acne.

The whole meat of the pumpkin, as well as a solution of its enzymes, is used in mask products for healthy exfoliation of the epidermis.

HOW PUMPKIN WORKS

These ingredients allow pumpkin masks to be a triplepowered treatment. The enzymes break down the bonds of the dead surface cells, allowing their exfoliation and exposure of younger epidermal cells.

Beta Hydroxy Acids cause a tightening of the skin, allowing the client to immediately feel that her skin is more taut. The Alpha Hydroxy Acids and Beta Hydroxy Acids penetrate the layers of the skin to encourage the turnover of the cells in the epidermis of the skin and the follicles, post treatment, bringing younger cells to the surface and cleansing the follicles of debris and dead cells. In the meantime, the antioxidants strength-



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THE CORNUCOPIA OF INGREDIENTS NATURAL TO A PUMPKIN TREATMENT PRODUCT:

NATURAL FRUIT ACIDS

Pumpkin contains natural lactic acid, glycolic acid and salicylic acid, allowing pumpkin products to enhance cell turnover of the epidermis both on the surface of the skin and in the follicles, as follows:

Lactic acid and glycolic acid enhance cell turnover on the surface, and stimulate the rejuvenation of collagen and elastin in the dermal layer.

Salicylic acid, a Beta Hydroxy Acid (BHA), being lipophilic, will penetrate the follicles to enhance cellular turnover in the walls of the follicles. Additionally, it is antibacterial. Both of these properties make it a great ingredient for acneic mask patients. The combination of these properties of AHAs and BHAs make pumpkin a good resource for masks for acne patients and for anti-ageing and hyperpigmentation patients, also.

HIGH POWERED ANTIOXIDANTS

Antioxidants are important to anti-ageing in that they scavenge free radicals, preventing them from attacking healthy cells. Pumpkin contains the highest concentration among vegetables of Vitamin A (beta carotene), a highly active antioxidant. It targets the cell receptors responsible for activating cell turnover.

It also stimulates growth of the base layer of the epidermis, helping the cells progress to maturity, and giving structural integrity to both the epidermis and the dermis. Vitamin C, another active antioxidant beneficial to warding off free radicals, is also present in pumpkins.

ENZYMES

Pumpkin contains proteolytic enzymes, which help in breaking down the keratin bond between dead cells. This allows the sloughing of the outer layer of dead cells without damaging the inner living cells. A smooth, more even toned and clean skin is the result of proteolytic enzyme activity in a treatment mask.

en the skin's defences against free radicals, fighting the ravages of ageing. Later, collagen and elastin rejuvenation is stimulated by the AHAs.

The immediately visible results with pumpkin masks are a nice exfoliation, evening of skin tones, and a tightening of the skin. "My patients compare the results on their skin to how they look after a microdermabrasion," says Dawn McCormick, aesthetician, Columbus, OH.

"They like the immediate improvement in smoothness, their more even coloration, and the glow they have when they leave." Smith uses this mask on her acne patients because it produces results, which can be noted immediately following the treatment. "It is rare to see immediate results with these patients, but this treatment delivers such a revitalising and soothing benefit, it allows them to leave very encouraged," she says.

Smith also uses this peel in a pre-laser mini series of three treatments. "It has a very noticeable cleansing effect on the skin, as well as generally enhancing the skin's health," she says. She also uses it in post-treatment series as it boosts the results noticeably.

HOW DOES THE TREATMENT FEEL?

The pumpkin mask is warm when first put on the face, caused by a natural exothermic property in pumpkin. With a well-formulated product, patients will call the feeling something like 'warm and prickly,' and it will last for several minutes. Then, it quiets to a pleasant feeling of tightening. The patient knows something good is happening here and can't wait to see what it is. "The patients are very pleased with the results – all of them," Andrea Riggs, aesthetician for Dr Sassan Alavi, a Cosmetic Surgeon in San Diego, CA.

Some patients have come to believe that a results-oriented mask must sting or it is not producing results. Product lines know this so some pumpkin masks are purposely formulated with a lower pH to produce a noticeable sting, maybe even irritating, leaving the skin inflamed and sensitive. However, 'no pain or no gain' does not have to be the theme with a well formulated product. With pumpkin, a properly balanced pH and percentage will prickle, but not sting, and will still produce the needed results.

MORE THAN A PROVISION

Pumpkin enzyme masks are unusually versatile and can be used many ways in the skincare room. It can be an enzyme treatment in the deep cleansing step to clear the surface of the skin and produce an immediate tightening while enhancing penetration of the ingredients in the following treatment mask. It can be the treatment mask for acneic, dehydrated, or ageing patients, exfoliating the epidermis and killing the bacteria in the follicles.

Smith uses the mask on mature skin with fine lines and hyperpigmentation, and on dehydrated and dull skin. She has found this treatment lessens the appearance of the fine lines, lightens the hyperpigmentation, and refines the texture when used in a series. "It also has an immediate firming effect for these patients," she says. "These treatments are fast, effective, and non-invasive, making them the perfect facial for a busy patient."

Pumpkin masks provide a needed change of pace in treatments. "Patients need more options in your chair, and this mask is a great one for that," says Riggs. Not only does the patient become bored when having the same treatment appointment after appointment, their skin does

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also, slowing or stopping its progress towards the goals. Pumpkin is a great treatment to alternate with others in the aesthetic treatment room as it performs well, with no irritation, on all skin types. It continues the client's move toward her goals, 'waking it up' if it has stopped responding to other treatments and taking it to the next level of treatment, or aiding it in maintaining achieved results. It can do this because of its enzymatic, exfoliative, and nourishing properties.

Pumpkin can also be performed in a dual modality to enhance other peels or microdermabrasions, if the client has previously had both treatments and has had no reaction to either. For example, if the client did well with microdermabrasion in an earlier service, and also with pumpkin, her microdermabrasion service could be enhanced by following it with a pumpkin mask, thus enhancing further exfoliation.

Some medical aestheticians are using pumpkin in a series of six or more weekly treatments. It awakens the epidermis and dermis on dull, lethargic skin, and stimulates production of elastin and collagen to support hydration in dehydrated skin. Riggs uses it post-facelift.

"They like it because there is no downtime and it is non-invasive, but leaves a very nice, refreshed skin that has a glow." Other skincare professionals are using it to moderate oil production, to treat Grades I and II acne skin, and as a change of pace to a salicylic series on higher grades of acne skin.

Initially, the aroma is what attracted aestheticians to pumpkin masks. "The patients love the smell of it," says Riggs. Then, they discovered its wide use in results-oriented treatments. Pumpkin is here to stay, and not only in the autumn as a promotion. 