

6 Ingredients That Will Soothe Even the Most Sensitive Skin

BY SARA SPRUCH-FEINER • DECEMBER 20, 2018



If you have sensitive skin, chances are you already know it — and you’ve learned that the hard way. You know not to try to a new cleanser without patch-testing it on a concealable part of your arm first, exfoliating can be a nerve-racking experience, and overall, the world of skincare often seems more frustrating than fun.

According to board-certified, New York City-based dermatologist Dr. Shari Marchbein, “sensitive skin can often be characterized as red, dry, flaky, and irritated — and it is much more difficult for those with sensitive skin to tolerate skincare products as many can cause burning and stinging, as well as rashes.” Some have had sensitive skin for as long as they can remember, while for others, it can “seemingly develop out of nowhere,” Dr. Marchbein notes. It is especially common, she explains, for those who experience other common skin conditions, like eczema and dry skin. Often, sensitive skin comes from a genetic predisposition, so you can’t get rid of it altogether.

And then, of course, there’s *sensitized* skin, which most likely all of us have experienced at one point, and is not the same as having a sensitive complexion. Rather, it’s temporarily irritated skin. “Sensitized skin,” Dr. Marchbein explains, can result from “using harsh products (i.e. retinoids, exfoliants and acids and other allergens), an allergy to a particular ingredient, or environmental changes.”

Overall, our cultural obsession with skincare is a good thing: it means that more people are pampering their faces and more aware of the risks of sun damage. However, it is possible to have too much of that same good thing. “On our quests for younger, healthier looking skin, we tend to over-exfoliate and over-cleanse,” shares Dr. Marchbein, who adds that excessive use of anti-aging products can cause your complexion to become red, irritated, and even break out.

To help pamper sensitive skin (or sensitized, overtreated skin), we’ve consulted with the experts. They’ve shared seven dermatologist-approved ingredients that not only won’t aggravate sensitive skin, but will nourish it.



Colloidal Oatmeal

If you ever got the chickenpox as a kid, your parents may have bathed you in oats — and they had good reason. “This ingredient has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties that help provide hydration, calm sensitive skin, and reduce itchiness,” Dr. Marchbein explains.

The brand Aveeno® is known for its use of colloidal oatmeal, and the [Aveeno Ultra-Calming® Night Cream](#) (\$17) is packed with the skin-calming grain. It blends oats with feverfew (a.k.a. wild chamomile — another hero ingredient for sensitive skin to soothe angry skin and calm down redness, but more on that later). Alternatively, natural brand Odacité® just launched a lightweight oil-serum, the [All-Embracing Serum](#) (\$95), which uses hydrating watermelon and colloidal oatmeal to banish irritation.

Calendula

This plant features flowers that have been used for centuries to aid in reducing discomfort and swelling, and the blossoms’ extract can have an equally anti-inflammatory effect on skin. (However, the plant is related to ragweed, so if you’re allergic to it or other related flora, steer clear.) Get a dose of calendula in the Very Gentle Calming Serum (\$36) from the “sensitive” range of natural skincare brand Trilogy®. This formula helps keep sensitive complexions calm and hydrated with not just calendula, but other skin soothers, including chamomile and green tea.

Chamomile

We often turn to chamomile tea to soothe an upset stomach or sore throat, so unsurprisingly, this one can also soothe irritated skin. Try the Kora Organics® Soothing Moisturizer for Sensitive Skin (\$48) — it uses the plant to calm and hydrate finicky, irritated complexions, whether the cause is from too much makeup or sun exposure.

The ingredient has multiple forms, and you can find all variations of the plant on skincare shelves around the world. For example, blue tansy, a.k.a. Moroccan chamomile, is incredibly popular thanks to its intoxicating herbaceous smell and vivid natural blue hue. According to Josh Rosebrook, founder of his eponymous brand, “[blue tansy] helps reduce histamine reactions related to allergies and inflammation by modulating the immune response, thereby helping calm skin.” He’s included it in the popular Josh Rosebrook® Vital Balm Cream (\$45).

Green Tea

When it comes to calming down skin, green tea is a go-to for beauty formulators. According to **Dr. Kristina Goldenberg**, a board-certified dermatologist in New York City, that’s because green tea is especially rich in an antioxidant called epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), which helps to reduce inflammation and soothe sensitive skin. She adds, “It also reduces irritation of sensitive skin from environmental allergens.”

Try the Naturally Serious™ Mask-Imum Revival Hydra-Plumping Mask (\$42), which uses antioxidant green tea in combination with a proprietary blend of other pollution-fighting antioxidants, colloidal oatmeal, and plumping and hydrating hyaluronic acid. We also like the Peet Rivko® Gentle Cleanser (\$30), which uses the calming leaf extract to leave sensitive skin feeling clean, but not stripped. Note: like calendula, patch test or avoid these ingredients if you have a ragweed allergy.

Ceramides

This ingredient is naturally found in your body, and are essentially lipids to help keep your skin’s moisture barrier strong. (This means they help prevent your skin from drying out.) “As we age or when we have dry skin, levels of ceramides decrease,” Dr. Marchbein notes. “Using a moisturizer containing ceramides can help restore the skin’s protective barrier and hydration.” She recommends classic CeraVe® Moisturizing Cream (\$15), a non-comedogenic moisturizer for face and body.

Helichrysum

This is another flower-derived hero ingredient (in this case, the sunflower family) and a star player in True Botanicals® Calm Pure Radiance Oil (\$110). According to the founder of the brand, Hillary Peterson, helichrysum has been used for centuries thanks to its anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial properties. Both green tea and chamomile are in this formula too, proving that when it comes to soothing ingredients, sometimes more is more.