

3 Natural Beauty Masks

There was a very brief time at the beginning of my freshman year of college when I wore makeup. I think the only real reason that I wanted to wear it was because I was forbidden to do so when growing up. I don't remember lamenting at any point during my childhood, not even when I was a teenager, that I couldn't wear makeup. But once it was within the realm of not "getting in trouble," I took the opportunity.

Wearing makeup didn't last long for me. In reality I think I was too lazy to put it on. It never become a true habit for me. But also, I preferred the natural look anyway. It started to feel very fake to put these substances on my skin to alter it. I embraced my natural tones, and after giving away whatever makeup I got with my one-time Mary Kay sign-up, I decided to stay au naturale for time to come.

Ever since I got the hint from my older sister (who also embraces a natural approach and does not wear makeup) to use Oil of Olay on my face, I have kept the skin on my face soft and smooth.

As I get older, of course the texture of my skin becomes a little tougher, so I've been looking at natural, homemade facial masks to give myself a little pampering and allow my skin a bit of a break from the day-to-day wear and tear.

I wanted to share with you three natural masks that I've uncovered. Perhaps you'd like to try one or all of them at some point.

1. The banana method

Use a fork to mash up a ripe banana (a medium sized banana is ideal) and mix it until it becomes a smooth paste. Take care to not mix it too much, as the longer you stir the banana, the more liquidy it becomes. Apply the mashed banana to your face

and neck, avoiding your eyes and lips. Allow the banana work its wonder on your skin for 15-20 minutes, then simply wash it off with cold water. After employing this technique a few times, you'll notice your skin feels softer as the natural moisturizer hydrates works its magic. Bananas are rich in potassium and vitamins E and C, all of which contribute to providing your glowing and clear skin. Banana is naturally an exfoliator, and will remove dead skin in a way that normal washing will not. Alternate versions of the banana mask are to add 2-3 tablespoons of plain yogurt and/or 1-2 tablespoons of honey for additional moisture. Another recommendation is to add a $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of lemon juice, which helps especially with reducing oily or greasy skin. Bananas have been called "nature's botox" as regularly (twice a week) applying a banana mask helps to reduce wrinkles and naturally fades dark spots. The inside of a banana peel can also be rubbed on acne and pimples to reduce inflammation and kill bacteria. For a brighter skin tone, you can also add tumeric to the mixture.

2. The Vinegar method

This one is even easier as you don't have to wash it off! Mix 2 tablespoons of apple cider vinegar with 2 cups of water. After you've washed your face, apply the solution to your face and let it dry. The natural elements will give your skin a deep clean and will also tighten your skin. Apple cider vinegar gives your skin such a boost as it restores your skin's proper pH levels and its beta-carotene helps protect against future skin damage. Applying apple cider vinegar directly on age spots, acne scars, and even fresh pimples will help them fade. To take this method up a spa notch, dip a washcloth in the mixture and allow the cloth on your face for 15 minutes while you rest and mindfully breathe. The acidic properties of vinegar means that excess oil on your face will be absorbed, your skin will feel smoother, and fine lines will be reduced.

3. The Powdered Milk method

I don't usually have powdered milk in my pantry, but after I tried this mask, it has become a staple! Take $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of powdered milk and add a little water, just enough to form a thick paste. Apply to your face, and allow to dry – usually 15 minutes. You can rinse with warm water, or remove with a warm washcloth. This natural cleanser, rich in vitamins and minerals, will give your skin a glow. The lactic acid aids to lighten and smooth your skin. Collagen production is increased by applying this mask, and it also helps to heal itchy skin. Powdered milk also destroys blackhead and whitehead pimples!

Another recipe to use if you want to achieve lighter skin is to mix 2 teaspoons of citrus juice and 1 teaspoon of oatmeal powder to 1 teaspoon of milk powder. You will be glowing after a month of applying this mask.

Like with the banana, you can also add 1 teaspoon of turmeric to 2 teaspoons of milk powder and 1 tablespoon of honey to zap pimples. Apply to your face, allow to dry out completely and rinse with warm water. You'll see blemishes disappear as well.

I'd be happy to hear your variations on these natural masks and to learn about your personal results. Please leave comments below.