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CBD in Skincare: From Ancient Herbal Remedy to Modern Beauty Trend

CBD (cannabidiol) has become a key ingredient in modern skincare products, praised for its anti-inflammatory, soothing, and hydrating properties. Its popularity aligns with consumer demand for clean beauty products with natural healing benefits. However, while CBD is trending in today’s beauty industry, its historical use dates back thousands of years, when it was used in various ancient medicinal practices for healing. This paper will explore the modern rise of CBD in skincare and its deep historical roots in traditional healing practices.

In recent years, CBD has exploded onto the beauty scene, appearing in a wide range of skincare products such as serums, creams, oils, and masks. Its appeal lies in its effectiveness in calming inflamed skin, reducing redness, and helping with conditions such as acne and eczema (Paula’s Choice, 2024). As more consumers shift toward natural skincare alternatives, CBD fits within the broader “clean beauty” movement, where plant-based ingredients are favored for their gentleness on the skin.

Several factors contribute to CBD’s popularity, including endorsements from influencers and celebrities and the wellness industry’s embrace of cannabis-derived products. In a study by Grand View Research (2023), the global CBD skincare market was valued at $633.6 million in 2022 and is expected to reach $8.9 billion by 2033, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 19.5% (Allied Market Research, 2024). This rapid growth is driven by consumer interest in holistic skincare solutions and the growing scientific research supporting CBD’s therapeutic properties (L.E.K. Consulting, 2022). Additionally, CBD’s rise aligns with a growing emphasis on sustainability and natural ingredients in the beauty industry. Brands are increasingly incorporating CBD as a key ingredient in products designed to promote skin wellness, often marketing it as a safer and more natural alternative to harsher chemicals (Dalziel & Pow, 2024). Celebrities like Kristen Bell have endorsed CBD and co-founded her own CBD skincare line called Happy Dance. Bell launches the brand in partnership with luxury CBD company Lord Jones, aiming to create affordable CBD skincare products for everyday use. Happy Dance’s target market emphasizes buying moms and those looking for more accessible self-care options (People, 2020; VegNews, 2021).

While CBD’s benefits may seem like a recent discovery, the use of cannabis for healing purposes dates back thousands of years. The first documented use of cannabis in medicine occurred in ancient China around 2700 BCE, where it was used to treat skin ailments and inflammation (Pharma Hemp, 2023). The Chinese pharmacopeia recorded the use of cannabis to address a variety of medical conditions, including skin conditions such as rashes and wounds (Sydney University, 2023). In India, cannabis has been a central component of Ayurvedic medicine, where it was used for its cooling and anti-inflammatory properties. In ancient Ayurvedic texts, cannabis was used in pastes and oils to treat skin issues and was considered a healing herb with both physical and spiritual significance (Vitality CBD, 2023). The holistic approach of Ayurvedic medicine aligns with how CBD is positioned in the modern beauty industry—both emphasize natural healing and the balance of mind, body, and skin. Moreover, cannabis was revered in ancient Egypt, where it was used for medicinal and cosmetic purposes. Archaeologists have found evidence of cannabis in Egyptian tombs, indicating its importance in health and beauty rituals, particularly for its healing and regenerative properties (Skin Inc., 2023). Across various ancient civilizations, cannabis was widely recognized for its ability to soothe the skin, which provides a historical foundation for its current use in skincare.

The shift of CBD from a traditional medicinal herb to a contemporary beauty product has been characterized by increased public interest in natural therapies and scientific validation of the substance. Studies have shown that CBD is incredibly beneficial for treating a range of skin issues, from aging to acne, thanks to its anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and calming qualities (Paula's Choice, 2024). Because of its scientific support, CBD is now a reputable and alluring ingredient in conventional beauty products, where it is promoted as having the power to soothe irritated skin, lessen redness, and provide deep moisture.

However, CBD's commercialization has been difficult. Consumers are confused regarding product labeling and CBD concentrations because to regulatory issues, especially in the US and Europe (Grand et al., 2023). Notwithstanding these obstacles, the beauty sector has persevered, with businesses creating more detailed policies for the use of CBD to guarantee consumer openness and confidence (L.E.K. Consulting, 2022). There are ethical considerations as well. The beauty business must respect the cultural value of cannabis in traditional medicinal techniques, given its recent surge in popularity. In some societies, especially those where cannabis has been used for millennia, the monetization of a historically revered plant may mask its profound relationship to traditional medicine (Vitality CBD, 2023).

The rising use of CBD in skincare products represents the fusion of conventional knowledge with cutting-edge scientific inquiry. CBD has recently gained popularity in the beauty business, although its use for health and beauty dates back to ancient China, India, and Egypt, where the plant was highly valued for its ability to soothe the skin. With more people turning to natural and plant-based beauty products these days, CBD is a potent component that ties cutting-edge skincare trends to ancient therapeutic customs. Knowing the background to CBD's use enhances our enjoyment of the substance and guarantees that, as it becomes a mainstay of beauty around the world, its cultural significance is respected.

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