

# BACK TO NATURE

Wellness guru Shefa Ali shares her empowering beauty ethos

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## SHEFA ALI

is a woman on a mission. A leading lifestyle coach, motivational speaker and yoga teacher, she

has emerged as a leading voice in the wellness space in Qatar.

### *What is your definition of beauty?*

Beauty to me is seeing someone who is completely at home in their own skin. Beauty is grace and confidence. It's a healthy body that displays discipline, commitment and hard work.

### *What is your approach to beauty?*

I believe beauty starts on a cellular level. You can put creams and serums on the surface layer of your skin and then make-up on top of that layer but if you are not taking care of your skin on a cellular level it's just covering up the true beauty. I like to start from the cellular level by being extremely mindful about what I put into my body because I know that will have a huge impact on the way I look. Longevity is also really important to me, so my approach involves a lot of biohacking to address premature aging. I firmly believe that prevention is better than cure.

### *How do you take care of yourself?*

The number one way I take care of my hair, skin and face is through the food I eat, and also the food I refrain from eating. Water – boring and basic, but so reliable. Two litres of water a day keeps my skin hydrated and supple. Fifteen years ago I used to have acne, I simply cut out dairy and the acne went away without the use of any medication. I know that's not the case for everybody, but it worked for me. I am really careful about eating sugar – it attacks skin cells causing loss of collagen and

premature aging. It's not that I never eat it, but it's definitely not something I would consume every day. For me it's important to have healthy skin, so make-up is just an enhancer but not absolutely necessary. I am a yogi, I practice yoga every day. The breathing that is involved in yoga allows the flow of oxygen into your body, again reaching your skin at the cellular level. Yoga also gives me a toned body (apart from yoga, I don't really do any exercising, except walking) but more importantly it calms my mind and gives me a sense of peace which I believe completely changes the way I look. When I feel relaxed, I give off a good energy which definitely makes one look better.

### *What is your skincare regimen?*

Less is more for me. I don't like using a lot of products, I like to keep it simple. I wash my face with water, I use one Baby Johnson's make-up wipe a day. If there is a day I have extra make-up on, then I will use the wipe with some organic coconut oil or macadamia nut oil to remove the excess. Just before I sleep, I smother my face with shea butter, by the time I wake up in the morning the shea butter has completely absorbed into my face leaving my skin super smooth. I love castor oil, it's really good for brows and lashes, I put some on before I sleep (be careful, not too much, you don't want it running into your eyes) and it makes my lashes and brows really glossy.

### *What other tips can you share with readers?*

We all need to find what works for us. This might sound disgusting but another thing that has totally changed my skin is garlic. I swallow a piece of raw garlic every day. I chop up one clove, leave it on the side for about 10 minutes to let the oxygen in the air activate a component called allicin, which is an organosulfur

antibacterial component present in garlic. After the 10 minute activation process, I swallow it with some water. I know you are thinking, it must smell gross, but actually it doesn't because you are swallowing it and not chewing it. It is anti-aging, anti-oxidant, anti-bacterial and anti-fungal. It's great for the skin and stimulating new hair growth and all around health.

### *Who has inspired your beauty ethos?*

My grandma is 88 and Masha'Allah she still has beautiful hair and skin. I remember as a child she always used to tell me to keep it simple. To date, the only thing she uses on her face is a decent moisturiser, soap and water, and that's it! On her hair, she uses coconut oil and it is still quite dark, she hasn't completely greyed. So if it works for grandma.....

### *What other home remedies can you share?*

- 1 Apple cider vinegar – I use this as a toner for my skin, I mix some with a tiny bit of water (to take away the stinginess), soak a cotton pad and wipe it over my face.
- 2 Aloe vera juice – I make aloe vera juice at home (takes literally no time at all) and I have a shot every day, this moisturises my skin on the cellular level and reduces inflammation.
- 3 Organic turmeric powder – This is a must for me every day. I make a turmeric latte with almond milk, fresh ginger and cinnamon. You can rely on turmeric for anti-aging benefits, it is packed with vitamins that facilitate the important skin renewal processes, and this is like gold dust for me. Sometimes I make a face pack with yogurt and a bit of turmeric, leave that on for 5 minutes and then wash it off. It leaves you with baby smooth skin.
- 4 A great food item for skin is gram flour. I mix that with either water or yogurt, smother it over my face and body, leave until it dries and then I wash it off in the shower. It absorbs excess oil from your skin. It has antibacterial properties, which help you get rid of bacteria that causes acne. You can also add honey, which also has antimicrobial properties. It moisturises your skin due to its ability to preserve moisture, this is one my grandmother told me about and I have been doing it since I was 15 years old.

### *What final message would you like to share with readers?*

In a world full of Photoshop, cosmetic surgery and self-obsession it's all too easy to think you need 'fixing' and you will never meet today's beauty standards. My message for *Grazia's* readers from the bottom of my heart would be that ultimately beauty lies in your character, you are smart, funny and strong and you don't need a mirror or anyone else for that matter to tell you that you are beautiful. ①