

■ FEATURE

A fresh look

Uneasy about your teen's penchant for health and beauty products?
 Fear not – today's products are pure and clean.

BY KARA MAYER ROBINSON

Good news, folks. Just because your teen is showing serious interest in her or his appearance, it doesn't mean you have to stock up on heavy makeup or gallons of body spray. Happily, many teens today are interested in a different approach to looking good, one that's natural and healthy. It's actually a perfect opportunity to teach your child how to choose quality products to maintain good hygiene.

Bath, body and Earth

"Going green is in," explains Mia DiFrancesco-Licata, brand manager and trainer for Kiss My Face, a line of natural and organic health and beauty products. "In school, magazines and television, the word is out [and] teens are being educated." Heavy perfumes and toxic ingredients are on their way out. (Phew.) Soaps, shampoos, lotions and facial care are taking center stage and all things clean and green are in.

This is good news if you want your teen to choose high-quality, pure products. You'll feel good knowing they're better for her health and (bonus!) many are in synch with the environment. Fun options for bath and body, like 100 percent Pure Organic Pomegranate Shower Gel (\$15 at Bath and Body Works) and Arcelia Lip Scrub (\$8 at Herbn-renewal.com), are popular and sold everywhere from the mall to the Web.

Reading labels is essential if she's concerned about health and the environment. Avoid products that contain such things as petroleum-derived ingredients like petrolatum, which form a film on the skin; phthalates, which can be part of a fragrance; and artificial colors, advises DiFrancesco-Licata. "All are absorbed through the skin, [which is] the largest organ in the body and are considered toxic."

Speaking of skin ...

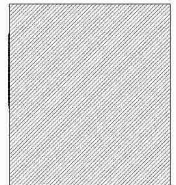
Clean, clear and natural

What teen isn't concerned about breakouts? Fortunately keeping skin clear doesn't have to mean overloading it with medicated lotions and serums. Today's all-natural products may be all he needs. A great option is Nelson's Pure & Clear skin care line (\$10 at Whole Foods), which includes a lightweight, fresh-smelling daily cleanser, toner and moisturizer. (I use it myself and even though I'm perfume-averse, I can't get enough of its spa-like scent.) On-the-spot treatments that use natural ingredients like tea tree oil, such as Break Out from Kiss My Face's Potent & Pure line (\$15 at Drugstore.com), are another non-medicinal option.

You'll find oodles of product lines geared toward teen facial care. But pass on those containing alcohol, advises DiFrancesco-Licata. "Alcohol, although used in many skin care lines, can dry the skin and cause sensitivities. Chemicals of any kind can cause major reactions that confuse the teens into thinking that their skin issues are hopeless. By using organic and natural products they can eliminate sensitivity issues and see how their skin truly reacts." And don't worry about products that contain oils, because oil can actually reduce oil, she says. (Who knew?)

Photo by Anne-Marie Caruso

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Simple, clean and pretty

I sort of hate to bring up makeup because I'm not a believer in kids with cosmetics. But I don't live in the dark ages – I get that many teens will wear makeup no matter what I think. Fortunately today's style is minimalist rather than over-the-top and many pros are helping teens discover that just a touch of makeup is all they need.

I asked Kimberly Kern, cosmetic chemist and owner of Kimberly's Creative Cosmetics (a mobile event service that teaches girls how makeup is formulated), for guidelines to help teens create a natural, clean look.

For starters, a tinted moisturizer is a simple way for your daughter to even out her complexion. Not enough? Try a very sheer foundation or powder. "With spring right around the corner, a powder bronzer can give a really nice glow," Kern says. Apply it with a big brush and sweep it on the nose, forehead and chin to get a natural, sun-kissed look. That may be all the color your daughter needs.

A little blush can add to a healthy, clean look if it's applied correctly (just a touch on the apples of her cheeks). An option that teens and parents may love is Pixi Sheer Cheek Gel in Sun Kissed (\$18 at Target), a gel color that you gently apply with your fingertips. It blends flawlessly and gives a healthy, rosy glow rather than a made-up look. (I confess: A teen I am not, but I absolutely love this stuff.)

Next up: eyes

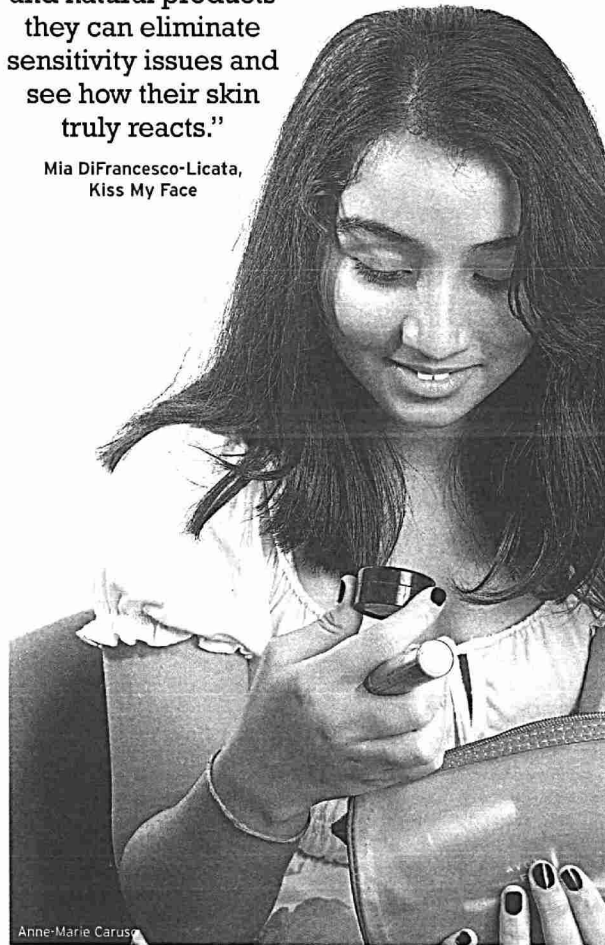
Here's where things get tricky. Many women, not to mention teens, misjudge the amount and placement of eye makeup. "One common faux-pas is to use black eyeliner on upper and lower lids," Kern says. "I've also seen a lot of heavy liner on the inner rims of eyes. This really makes the eyes look smaller and is way too much eye makeup for a young girl. I like pencil eyeliner on the top lid that's smudged so there's no definite line." If your daughter wants some color on her lids, hues of gold, green or pink look great next to brown eyes while blue eyes really pop with neutral brown and olive tones.

Today's clean and young looks pair perfectly with subtly tinted lips. "I love lip gloss!" Kern gushes. In soft shades, they add just the right amount of "pretty" while simultaneously keeping lips moist. I'm a fan of Jemma Kidd Air Kiss Shine Lip Gloss (\$16 at Target). Kern likes M*A*C Lipglass (\$14 at Nordstrom). "It feels great on your lips and is available in so many shades," she says.

A trip to Sephora or Target can be lots of fun for a teen. If you're along for the

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ride, it's a perfect opportunity to show your daughter that you support her desire to use health and beauty products while helping her make the right choices.

Maybe your son is shy and prefers you to pick up a tube of acne gel on your weekly trip to Whole Foods. That's OK, too, especially if he knows you support his desire to take care of himself.

When he strides out of the house with his head held high, you'll know you had a hand in helping him feel more confident in a healthy, natural way. Mission accomplished.

Kara Mayer Robinson is a Bergen County freelance writer who believes there's no such thing as too many sticks of lip balm (one for the diaper bag, the car, the nightstand ...).