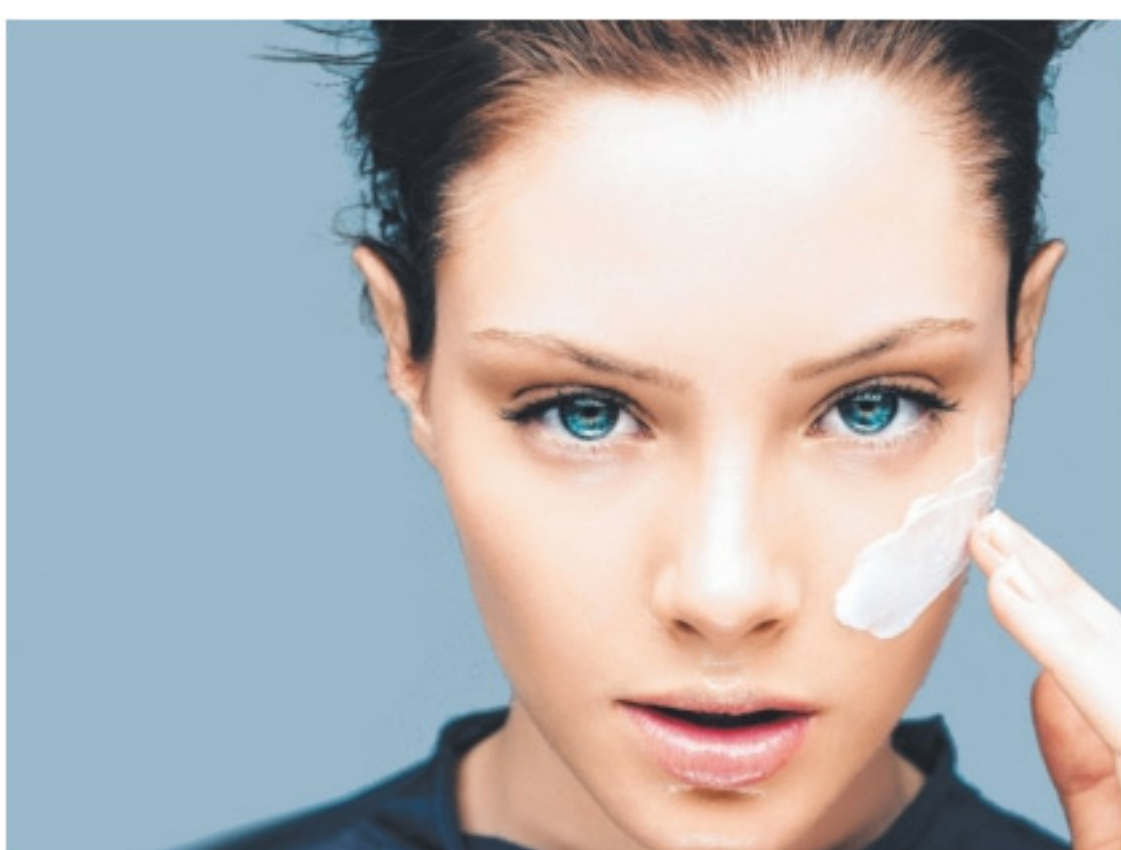


Can arnica make you slim?

By Katrina Lawrence | First published: November 13th, 2011



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From the catwalk to the cosmetic surgeon, arnica is being touted as the new beauty hero.

+ Did you know?

The arnica plant is also sometimes known as mountain tobacco, leopard's bane and wolfsbane.

The fashion set is forever searching for new ways to look more beautiful: goji berries, noni juice... the list goes on. So when reports surfaced recently that some designers and models in New York were taking the homeopathic herb arnica to slim down and clear their skin before a big event, it was hardly a surprise. But is it a good idea?

Arnica is a pretty, yellow, daisy-like flower that grows mostly in mountainous areas of Europe, and is a favourite traditional medicine for alternative health practitioners and sports stars alike.

"Arnica's traditional use in homeopathy is for injury and trauma," says Kira Sutherland, naturopath, homeopath and member of the Biotherm Energy Team. "If you take it soon after bumping yourself, you will have minimal bruising because it stops the bleeding under the skin. It also aids recovery by reducing inflammation."

Sutherland regularly takes arnica – in both oral and topical cream form – to combat the effects of a sporty lifestyle.

Arnica is one of homeopathic brand Brauer Natural Medicine's most popular products. "It's arguably the most widely used natural product on the planet," says Brauer's naturopath Robert Medhurst. "It has broad appeal, from the mums and dads who select it for their children's and their own bumps and bruises, through to teenagers and adults who use it after sporting activities, all the way through to retirees with bumps and body aches."

Slimming secret?

What about the fashion types using it to slim down and fit into a dress by Friday night? "It's an interesting application of the product," Medhurst says.

Sutherland is more sceptical. "Arnica has no traditional application for slimming or puffiness. It's used to calm down swelling, but that's from an injury. You could have inflammation and bloating due to food allergies or sensitivities, but the most effective remedy in this case would be to simply eliminate those foods."

Dermatologist Dr Chris Kearney, from Sydney Specialist Dermatology, says: "There are other properly tested agents that can reduce puffiness such as anti-inflammatory medications. I prefer to recommend these if necessary as we have the correct amount of scientific data regarding their effectiveness and potential side effects."

Dr Kearney questions arnica's effectiveness in general. "The data in this area is conflicting; some studies show measurable effectiveness and others show none. The general consensus is it does have some anti-inflammatory and anti-bruising properties but they are probably quite mild."

Healing powers

Still, arnica has many devotees in the beauty industry. "We use both topical and oral arnica before and after any facial cosmetic operation and, in some cases, before injectables," says surgeon Dr William Mooney. "We have used it for many years and it works. There is a radical reduction in the amount and length of time of post-surgery bruising."

Arnica serves various other beauty purposes. Jurlique, which has sold a skin-calming Arnica Cream and Lotion (\$45 and \$32 respectively, 1800 805 286) since the company's 1985 beginnings, has added the ingredient to all three of its eye creams "because of arnica's soothing and cooling effects," says national education manager, Anya Rogers.

Sutherland says: "I think it can be effective in skincare and it's very much on trend. My only concern is it is an endangered plant and is hard to cultivate.

We use tiny amounts in homeopathy, but as for skincare, let's just say I hope it doesn't become too popular!"



Top arnica beauty buys

L'Occitane Dry Skin Foot Cream, \$16.95, (02) 8912 3000

Lavender and arnica combine to soothe hot and bothered feet, while the 20 per cent shea butter works skin-softening wonders.

Decleor Paris Circulagel Refreshing Toning Gel, \$80, 1800 808 993

This arnica-infused gel cools and relaxes legs and peps up circulation with the addition of camphor and menthol.

Ere Perez Amazing Arnica Concealer, \$32, (02) 9130 3582

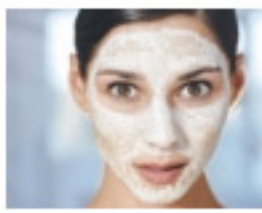
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Thanks for this interesting article,I was not aware of the many uses of arnica.

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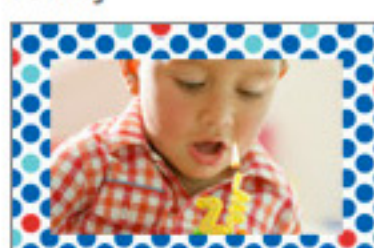
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