

# K-12 IYS Activity



## Summary

Mud or clay masks have been used for many centuries to detoxify, deeply cleanse, and soothe the skin. Making and using a mud mask is an enjoyable and relaxing activity that connects you to ancient uses of natural substances such as clays and plants, both sourced from the soil. This recipe for a mud mask allows anyone to try this homemade facial.

## Materials

You can't use mud from the yard, even if you have lots of clay in your soil. It is safer, and also easy and inexpensive, to buy purified clay powder, known as cosmetic clay, to use for a homemade mud mask. These clays have been isolated from the soil and processed to remove impurities and are completely safe for cosmetic application.

- 1 Tbsp. of *liquid*: milk (for dry skin) or water (for oily skin) or cooled green tea (for younger looking skin)
- 1 Tbsp. aloe vera gel (optional)
- 2 Tbsp. cosmetic clay (available at health food stores and drugstores)
- 3 drops of essential oil (such as chamomile, apricot, tea tree, or rose, *details in text*)—optional.
- Bowl (not metal)
- Spoon (not metal)
- Measuring spoons
- Facial cleanser
- Moisturizer
- Soft towel
- Washcloth

# Relax with a Mud Mask

A simple recipe for homemade facial masks from clay

## Background and Additional Information

Societies discovered cosmetics thousands of years ago to serve many purposes: for rituals, war paint, beauty, and health. Many of the ingredients in these cosmetics came directly from the earth, such as clay, mud, minerals, and some pigments to name a few. Both male and female Egyptians used various oils, lotions, masks, and makeup. Ancient Greeks used red clays for lipstick and chalk on their faces. In ancient Rome, well-to-do citizens traveled to resorts for treatments similar to what can be found in modern spas, including hot spring soaks and mud baths.

Many varieties of clays exist in the world, with colors ranging from white to red to green. The varieties also provide different benefits to your skin. Green illite clay, bentonite clay, or montmorillonite clays benefit oily and acne-prone skin. Kaolin clays (either white or pink) work well on sensitive and dry skin.

There are many other ways to personalize your mud mask, based on your mood or skin's condition. You can add different types of essential oils to provide some aromatherapy and health benefits along with the benefits from the clay. Tea tree or lavender oils, for example, can also help with acne or clogged pores, while rose oil is a calming anti-inflammatory. More details on other essential oils can be found at <http://bodyunburdened.com/essential-oils-for-skincare/>.

## Procedure

1. Mix 1 Tbsp. of liquid (*see Materials list*) and 1 Tbsp. of aloe vera in a bowl.
2. Stir in the cosmetic clay a little at a time. Continually stir with the spoon while adding the clay.
3. Now stir in the essential oil drops and thoroughly combine all the ingredients. The mixture should seem spreadable but paste-like. Add a little more liquid if the "mud" is too thick. If the "mud" is too thin, add a little more clay or even oatmeal.
4. Wash and gently dry your face.
5. Use your fingers to spread the mud mask on your face, avoiding the eyes and lips. Apply in a thick layer.
6. Leave the mask on from 5 to 15 minutes. Be careful about making facial gestures, which may crack the mask as it dries. Play some relaxing music and use this time to contemplate the connection between you and the earth and past civilizations. People have used the soothing properties of clay to improve their skin and spirit for thousands of years.
7. Rinse off the mask with warm water and a washcloth. Be sure to use a moisturizer afterwards since the clay may dry your skin.

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