

# Dragon's Blood: Benefits, Uses & Side Effects | Holland & Barrett

*Holland & Barrett*

What if we told you that dragon blood could be the secret to plumper and more youthful-looking skin? Or that it has remarkable skin-healing qualities?

Mythical though it may sound, dragon's blood is very real. It's actually a tree resin, and a popular ingredient in skincare with some seriously impressive science-backed beauty benefits.

## What is dragon's blood?

Dragon's blood is the name given to a scarlet resin found in *the Croton lechleri* tree, found in the Amazon rainforest.

This tree is also known by the name *sangre de drago* – which translates from Spanish as 'dragon's blood'.<sup>1</sup>

It's easy to see why the *Croton lechleri* tree carries this gruesome name. When cut, the tree appears to bleed as the vivid red resin seeps out from the bark.

Dragon's blood resin has been used by indigenous tribes in South America for hundreds of years.

It was used commonly for skin disorders.<sup>2</sup> Today, dragon's blood incense is used in aromatherapy and meditation.

Dragon's blood trees are found in other parts of the world, too. One variety, the *Dracaena cinnabari*, is native to an island off Yemen.

Other varieties of 'bleeding trees' grow in the Canary Islands and have been recorded throughout history in India and China, too.<sup>4</sup>

## What is dragon's blood in skincare?

Dragon's blood is beloved by the skincare industry thanks to this plant resin's purported ability to soothe, hydrate and plump up skin. It's also thought to minimise redness and calm sensitive skin.

Dragon's blood is often included in skincare products alongside ingredients like hyaluronic acid, a humectant which draws moisture into the skin, and natural nourishers like aloe vera and shea butter.

You'll find everything from dragon's blood serum, dragon's blood moisturisers, dragon's blood face masks and dragon's blood sculpting gel.

## Summary

- Dragon's blood is a plant resin from a rare tree which appears to bleed when cut
- Dragon's blood has been in use for centuries as a folk remedy

## 9 dragon's blood benefits

Dragon's blood can be used for all sorts of things, from moisturising to skin redness. We take a look at the top 9 benefits here.

### 1. Wound support

Studies show that dragon's blood has a significant effect on wounds.

In one study, a group of 60 people used either dragon's blood cream or a placebo on a fresh wound for 20 days.

By the end of the trial, those who had used the dragon's blood cream experienced a far greater degree of healing than those who'd used the placebo.<sup>5</sup>

Researchers think this is down to the phenolic compounds dragon's blood contains, as well as the healing alkaloid taspine.<sup>6,7</sup>

### 2. Skin health

Trees secrete resin when they're injured, which floods the area with highly concentrated nutrients, protecting the tree against infection and warding off insect attack.<sup>8</sup>

This is not unlike a human's own healing system which causes blood to clot around a wound, and scabs to form.

Dragon's blood does something similar with our own skin.

When dry, the resin forms a membrane-like protective layer which can protect the skin from pathogens and environmental damage.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. It's antimicrobial

Studies show that dragon's blood holds potent antimicrobial benefits.

One study from 2011 showed that the growth of microorganisms was inhibited thanks to the presence of the phenolic compounds in dragon's blood resin.<sup>10</sup>

This means potential skin-healing benefits, including for skin concerns such as breakouts, which are exacerbated by an imbalance of bacteria on the skin.<sup>11</sup>

### 4. It has antioxidant properties

Dragon's blood is rich in flavonoids.<sup>12</sup> These naturally occurring plant compounds hold antioxidant qualities and help the body scavenge cell-damaging free radicals which can threaten our health.<sup>13</sup>

Antioxidants are wonderful for skin health, as they help protect against UV damage and inflammation – two of the major wrinkle-causing skin enemies.<sup>14</sup>

## 5. Collagen production

Dragon's blood has a pro-collagen effect on the skin.

Collagen is a protein which is found naturally in the skin.

Boosting collagen in the skin can leave you with a plumper, firmer look. Impressively, dragon's blood taken both internally and applied to the skin can actually help stimulate collagen production in skin.<sup>15</sup>

Collagen gives skin that bouncy structure we associate with youth. Collagen levels in the skin decline naturally as we age, which is why it's such a huge buzzword in skincare and nutrition.<sup>16</sup>

**Handpicked content:** [Top 9 collagen benefits](#)

## 6. It has soothing effects

Adding dragon's blood to your skincare regime could have some seriously soothing effects.

Research shows that dragon's blood, when applied externally to the skin, is a solution for redness and sensitive skin.

Sensitisation is a key factor in various skin concerns, including eczema, [sunburn](#), acne and [psoriasis](#).<sup>17</sup>

What's more, a consistent, low-grade sensitisation of the skin caused by environmental and lifestyle factors is associated with skin ageing.<sup>18</sup>

Dragon's blood at a 20% concentration proved the most effective in one study.<sup>19</sup>

## 7. It can help soothe burns

Dragon's blood is extremely good at soothing the skin.

A particular type of dragon's blood from trees grown in the Chinese province of Yunnan has demonstrated its efficacy in two studies on the effect of burns – both superficial burns and deeper ones.<sup>20,21</sup>

## 8. It's moisturising

Plant resins, such as dragon's blood, help prevent moisture loss in the skin by creating a protective layer which helps seal in hydration.

It is especially effective when used in conjunction with other hydrating ingredients like [hyaluronic acid](#).

## 9. A dragon's blood facial may help beat redness

It may seem strange that a bright red plant extract which was once used as a textile dye can actually help alleviate redness in the skin.<sup>22</sup>

However, dragon's blood is renowned for its calming effect on skin redness.

No studies exist to back this up to date, but devotees of dragon's blood skin products often cite anti-redness abilities among its benefits.

## **Dragon's blood side-effects**

All plant resins have the potential to be irritating to the skin. In some cases, irritant contact dermatitis may occur after contact with dragon's blood powder or dragon's blood resin.<sup>23</sup>

Skin creams containing dragon's blood have been dermatologically tested for tolerance and are far less concentrated than the pure version. This means they are less likely to cause reaction, although reactions are still possible.

If in doubt, perform a patch test on a small area of skin and leave for 48 hours to ensure no reaction occurs.

## **Is dragon's blood safe for everyone?**

Some varieties of dragon's blood tree contain latex and may not be suitable for those with a latex allergy.<sup>24</sup>

## **Can you use dragon's blood cream every day?**

As long as you don't have any adverse skin reaction to it, dragon's blood creams, serums and other skincare products are safe for everyday use.<sup>25</sup>

However, we recommend carrying out a patch test if using dragon's blood for the first time.

### **Summary**

- Dragon's blood has a proven healing effect on wounds, is anti-microbial and forms a protective layer over skin, helping keep germs away
- Dragon's blood is anti-inflammatory and pro-collagen, making it a sought-after skincare ingredient
- Dragon's blood is known as antioxidant thanks to its natural flavonoids
- Some people can be sensitive to dragon's blood, so if in doubt perform a patch test

*The advice in this article is for information only and should not replace medical care. Please check with your GP or healthcare professional before trying any supplements, treatments or remedies. Food supplements must not be used as a substitute for a varied and balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle.*