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Millennial Women Want More Green Beauty Products

Take one look at Sephora, Ulta, and even Target's beauty offerings, and you're bound to find brands boasting products touted as "organic," "natural," and "green." Over the years, **green beauty** has been on the up and up, with an influx of lesser-known brands making it to mainstream beauty stores, and, according to a recent survey, it's because women are demanding it.

A **Harris Poll survey** found that 59 percent of women over the age of 35 believe buying green beauty is important to them, while an even larger percentage—73 to be exact—of millennial women seek out cleaner, all-natural products.

anecdotally thought there was a lot of interest for green beauty, especially with the millennial age group, but there wasn't anything to point to," Kari Gran, the administrator of the survey and founder of her own eponymous organic cosmetics and skin-care line, tells *Allure*. So Gran set out to support her theory. The questionnaire, which was her second-annual Green Beauty Barometer, asked 1,126 women across the country, aged 18 and older, to "measure their attitudes and purchase behaviors toward all-natural beauty products." And the results were loud and clear: Young women want cleaner, greener beauty.

"I think millennial women have a really great aptitude for technology—they've been raised with it—and have had a lot of exposure to information," says Gran. "So if you think about millennials now and when [green beauty] started to really resonate for people, like 10 or so years ago, it's just been something that has been spoken of, like food, like organic and non-GMO food."

Fittingly so, in recent years, beauty retailers have begun to see a shift in sales, as the demand for cleaner, organic products becomes more apparent.

Credo Beauty, a natural beauty space that got its start online in 2015 and has since opened two stand-alone stores in San Francisco and New York City, realizes the need for green cosmetics and skin care, especially among younger people. "Credo is in communities and that brings with it moms and daughters shopping together—so a really diverse age range and demographic—but the concentrated population is 20 to 45 years old, says Annie Jackson, Credo's vice president of merchandising and planning. "The millennial age group has grown up with the Internet," says Jackson. "They are curious, and love to research and understand ingredients and what they do: Who the founder is, where they are from, does their passion and perspectives align? Our total focus is ingredient and brand education with our staff for that very reason. They need to know more than the customer that has done their research, so our staff can be an additional resource to them."

Even mainstream shops that aren't typically touted as holistic brick and mortars, like Bluemercury, have noticed customers' shift in interests.

"We have carried natural and green brands since we were founded 17 years ago," says Bluemercury cofounder Marla Malcolm Beck. "This category tends to resonate with Gen X who is worried about the environment and chemicals in her skin care, as well as millennials who like clean skin care packed with recognizable naturals." And according to Malcolm Beck, the need for those "recognizable naturals," is precisely why Bluemercury is already working on revamping spring offerings, which, yes, include green beauty.

"Most of the products [Bluemercury offers] are vegan and gluten-free, and they are always paraben-free, not tested on animals, and fragrance-free," says Malcolm Beck. "We have a new set of clean, green, organic, natural brands launching in the spring, targeting millennials, the luxury consumer, and are also extending our color cosmetic selection in naturals."

With the growing demand for green products comes a greater awareness of the ingredients *inside* those products. Case in point: According to the survey, 55 percent of women over age 35, plus the 62 percent of millennial women, read and reread products' ingredient labels before making a purchase, in order to steer clear of certain "nasty" ingredients.

Before we dive into what those "nasty" ingredients actually are, it's important to note that, according to a recent analysis by the [Environmental Working Group](#), many people believe that products touted as "organic," with labels claiming there are organic ingredients inside, are made with *only* organic ingredients, which isn't actually the case.

In order for products to claim USDA approval, which comes with a fancy organic seal to boot, 95 percent of the ingredients must meet federal organic standards, including how those ingredients are sourced, according to the EWG. Which means the products that are sitting top shelf in your medicine cabinet that have "made with organic ingredients" listed on its packaging, must have the USDA certification to *actually* be considered organic.

But what about products that are labeled as "natural"? "The word natural is a really, really tricky word because, by definition, natural generally means from the earth," says Gran. "And that's where petroleum is from—the earth. It's mined, it's crude oil that we bring up. So technically, it's a natural ingredient we bring up. But most people feel most comfortable with the word 'natural' in that it's probably good for you."

So, as Gran recommends, tread lightly with natural products, and read and reread those labels for a full ingredient list. And if you're worried about certain ingredients, she recommends filtering them through the EWG's Skin Deep database to find out how safe—or unsafe—your stash is.

Now, back to those ingredients. "I think especially now, millennials are reading their ingredient labels on cosmetics and skin care," says Gran, adding that when women *do* check the labels, sometimes they're not exactly sure what they should be avoiding.

“The most interesting thing was that women were really aware of that fact that they wanted to avoid sulfates,” says Gran. “And yet, the most sought after green beauty was skin care. And sulfates are primarily ingredients found in hair care.”

And while you should avoid these filler ingredients, Gran points out that there is another major no-no ingredient consumers should go out of their way to bypass: phenoxyethanol. “With parabens, oftentimes they are replaced with another chemical preservative called phenoxyethanol, and that’s something that’s not considered a great ingredient in the European Union, says Gran. “When we look to how many ingredients the E.U. has banned, and how many ingredients the U.S. has banned, it’s shocking.”

In case you weren’t aware, more than 1,300 ingredients have been banned from being manufactured in cosmetics and skin-care products in Europe, while the U.S. list includes less than a dozen.

Point being, women may not know exactly why they want to avoid certain ingredients, but they are *definitely* going out of their way to do so, and we hope the demand for cleaner products continues to sky-rocket.