



Whether you're sick of the sight of chocolate or can't get enough of the stuff, there's no escaping it this month

Instead of overdoing it, why not try your hand at our simple mint chocolate chip body scrub? Packed full of natural ingredients, this quick and easy recipe is a feast for the senses that's kind to your skin and your waistline ? now that's some tasty science.

Ingredients 1 cup sugar (or 1/2 cup sugar, 1/2 cup sea salt) 1/2 cup almond oil 2 teaspoons cocoa powder 1 teaspoon vanilla essential oil A few drops of peppermint oil

Simply mix together all the ingredients and scrub your way to healthy looking (and sweet-smelling) skin. The Science Every good scrub needs an exfoliating component, and what better ingredients to include than nature's finest? If you've got more sensitive skin, we recommend sticking to the original recipe, but those of you looking to really scrub up can substitute half of the sugar quantity for larger and more abrasive sea salt granules, which will really slough off any stubborn dead skin cells. If you've never used almond oil for cosmetic purposes before, we recommend that you stock up now. Its composition is approximately the same as the natural oil found in the stratum corneum (outer layer of the epidermis) of babies' skin, making it readily absorbed and suitable for use on all skin types. As well as its moisturising properties, almond oil also helps to remove impurities and dead skin cells lifted from the surface of the epidermis by the exfoliating action of the sugar in this recipe.

Crammed with essentials like vitamin E, almond oil also offers protective properties for the skin. Vitamin E acts as an antioxidant to target free radicals generated by UV radiation, counteracting their ageing effects on the skin and helping to prevent even more harmful free radical-induced damage to cells that can increase skin cancer risk. Apart from giving us the all-important chocolate hit in this product, cocoa powder also has a high caffeine content (around 12mg/tablespoon), making its properties very different to the more commonly-used cosmetic ingredient of cocoa butter, which acts as a moisturising agent in many products. When applied topically, caffeine is known to have skin-firming properties, helping to tighten skin, prevent puffiness and even help with the battle against cellulite. Not only this, but scientific studies have also suggested that caffeine itself can act as an antioxidant, again helping to protect skin from

harmful free radicals. We knew chocolate wasn't all bad! Putting the 'mint' in mint chocolate chip, peppermint oil isn't just for sensual indulgence. Peppermint oil (known as *Mentha x piperita* in the scientific world) has been scientifically shown to act as an antibacterial agent in in vitro studies, inhibiting the growth of a range of bacteria. Further research then confirmed antifungal properties for this ingredient, suggesting that it can also play a role in protection of skin from such microbes.