

THE BEAUTY EXPERT

# allure

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## Daily **BEAUTY**REPORTER

### I Drank Cactus Water for a Week To Get Better Skin



My first **prickly pear** encounter was in a gorgeous hot-pink margarita in San Antonio. Years later, I realized that some of my favorite skin-care products (**Kahina Prickly Pear Seed Oil, Osmia Organics Luz Facial Brightening Serum, Jurlique Calendula Redness Rescue Serum**) also contained the desert fruit. Prickly pear had become a certifiable skin-care craze on account of its insane hydration skills (when applied topically, that is, not swilled with tequila). "As an oil, prickly pear offers extremely high levels of essential fatty acids which help to protect and nourish the skin, while improving the skin's barrier function," says Harold Lancer, a dermatologist in Beverly Hills. "This means that the oil helps the skin retain moisture in the long-term." And now, cactus water has hit the **beauty-beverage scene**, claiming to have the same skin-hydrating superpowers as its topical oil counterpart. So, because life is full circle and because I'm on an eternal quest for happier, healthier skin, I'm now I'm back to drinking the stuff—not in the form of an Insta-worthy cocktail, but rather a one-week supply of CaliWater's Wild Prickly Pear Cactus Water. The L.A.-based company claims that the beverage revitalizes and hydrates the skin, so I set out to find out if ingesting cactus water is as good for the skin as slathering it on your face.

When it came time to crack open the drink on day one (the plan was to drink one 11.2-ounce box each day), I felt something close to fear: CaliWater's paper box packaging is reminiscent of the kind you find on coconut waters, which I find nauseating (though, full disclosure, I've only had them while hungover, when pretty much anything would make me queasy). I was delighted to discover that CaliWater, which is made from prickly-pear puree mixed with filtered water, organic cane sugar, and organic lemon juice, tastes like very lightly sweetened water. I could guzzle it nonstop—and not just in the name of better skin, it turns out: "Cactus water made from prickly pear cactus has so many health benefits," says dermatologist Judith Hellman. "It's chock-full of antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals that are anti-inflammatories and immune-system boosters." (I have redness-prone, sensitive skin, so the anti-inflammatory aspect had a lot of appeal for me, but that "immune-system booster" bit sounded pretty good, too, as the weird fall weather in NYC has shifted my overall health into a long-term semi-cold state—in addition to causing my skin's moisture levels to plummet.) I didn't notice less redness or more hydration in my skin from that first box—slurped down in about a minute—but it boosted my energy promptly. By day three, my skin looked noticeably dewier and calmer and felt tangibly softer.

Cactus water is like a delicious liquid multivitamin. In addition to vitamins B and C, beta-carotene (an antioxidant), calcium, potassium, magnesium, and iron, "cactus fruits contain high levels of amino acids, especially proline, serine, and taurine," says Paula Simpson, a certified nutritionist and biochemist. Taurine may bring sketchy energy drinks to mind, but it's a potent antioxidant that "helps to reduce free radicals and prevent moisture loss in the skin," Hellman explains. "It also contains betalains, anti-inflammatories that fight cell damage and ward off premature aging." (Inflammation is one of the first signs of aging).

So does drinking prickly pear have the same affect on skin as applying it? "In a way, yes," says Lancer. "It's a natural source of electrolytes and minerals. The body requires electrolytes to remain properly hydrated, an important aspect of skin health." Although there are more factors than I could possibly recount here that contribute to my skin's day-to-day caprices, by day five, it looked healthier and glowier than it has in months. Adding cactus water to my lineup of moisture delivery systems (joining day creams, night creams, and facial mists) is my new way to load up on heavy-duty hydration.