

TODAY

18 dermatologist-approved anti-aging products to add to your skin care routine

Kara Birnbaum / TODAY

**April 17, 2017, 12:04 PM PDT / Updated Oct. 14, 2022, 8:49 AM PDT / Source: TODAY
By Camryn La Sala, Colleen Sullivan and Fran Sales**

When dealing with matters of the skin, everyone turns to the same type of person: a dermatologist. They're the experts on not only what's good for you, but also the things that actually work. What better way to discover the most effective products than by finding out what the pros use on their own skin?

Shop TODAY interviewed several dermatologists about the anti-aging products they actually use, as well as the best practices they recommend, to keep their skin looking youthful. Some noteworthy findings: Sun exposure is a big culprit, the time of day and order you use certain products matter, and — surprise! — it's never too early to start using products with anti-aging properties. ("You can start in your early 20s," Dr. Debra Jaliman, an NYC-based board-certified dermatologist, told us.)

Keep reading to find out what exactly you should look for in an anti-aging product, what your skin care routine *should* have, answers to your frequently asked questions, and — of course — the list of our experts' and editors' 19 recommendations for the best anti-aging products.

TYPES OF ANTI-AGING PRODUCTS AND INGREDIENTS

Anti-aging products, like other kinds of skin care, come in a variety of forms, including creams, serums, lotions, gels, ointments and even powders. To help you sift through the abundance of choices out there, our experts listed the following products and ingredients you should be looking for:

SUNSCREEN

Yes, there's moisturizing and exfoliating — but preventing damage from the sun's UV rays is arguably the most important part of your skin care routine, according to Jaliman and **Dr. Rebecca Baxt, a board-certified dermatologist and medical director at CosMedical in New Jersey**. Why? Because those rays degrade your skin's collagen, which causes hyperpigmentation and wrinkles, the latter explained.

"I could do a whole long article on sunblock, but the basics are to make sure it's at least an SPF 30 broad spectrum and [to] apply daily to sun-exposed surfaces," she said, adding that the

hardest part for many people are reapplying sunscreen every 1 to 2 hours, instead of only when they go to the beach. This leads to "incidental sun exposure," one of the most common causes of skin aging, Baxt added. She also said that there's no "safe" amount of time to be outside in the sun without your skin experiencing its rays' degrading effects.

RETINOIDS

After protecting your skin from UV rays and making sure its moisturized, retinoids are the next most important ingredient to add to your regimen, Baxt said. She pointed out over-the-counter examples of this chemical compound that's a derivative of vitamin A — serums with retinol or Differin, for instance. (There's also Retin-A, a stronger retinoid, available via prescription.)

Retinoids have a plethora of benefits: They diminish the appearance of wrinkles by thinning the skin's top layer, reduce hyperpigmentation, and stimulate collagen production, Baxt explained. Plus, Jaliman said, the increased cell turnover from this ingredient helps unclog pores.

VITAMIN C PRODUCTS

After sunscreen and retinoids, there are other categories of skin care products you can use that Baxt said are less important, but that still contribute to small anti-aging improvements when added to your routine. The first of these is vitamin C, "a potent antioxidant that stimulates collagen production and also brightens the skin," explained Jaliman. When applied first thing in the morning, before sunscreen, "[it] can help reverse skin damage if any rays get through," Baxt explained.

ACIDS, PEPTIDES AND OTHER INGREDIENTS

Acids and peptides are similar to vitamin C in the sense that they also contribute to small anti-aging improvements, Baxt said. Examples of helpful acids include glycolic acid, a sugarcane-derived alpha-hydroxy acid (AHA) that exfoliates skin, and hyaluronic acid, a substance our skin produces naturally and that binds its weight 1,000 times in water (read: very, very hydrating). "It helps minimize the look of fine lines and wrinkles due to its plumping properties," Jaliman explained.

Peptides are a type of amino acid that, Jaliman said, "stimulate new collagen production [and] improve the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles." Niacinamide, a form of vitamin B3, is another effective antioxidant she also recommends, not only because the substance, like other antioxidants, help counteract the stressful oxidative effects of UV rays, but also "helps even skin tone ... and is anti-inflammatory, so it helps reduce redness," the dermatologist said.\

MOISTURIZERS

Moisturizing is another necessary step in your anti-aging skin care routine that Jaliman said is important to be doing "at any age." Moisturizers of any variety (e.g., lotions, creams, serums and ointments) generally "are often labelled as antiaging since moisturizing reduces the appearance of wrinkles, and the FDA allows that labeling," **Baxt added.**

Squalane is another moisturizing ingredient that you'll see in many anti-aging products, said Jaliman. Squalane is a lipid that's a stable, cosmetic-ready (and thus skin-friendly) form of squalene, which is the oil our skin naturally produces to protect our skin and keep moisture in. We produce less of this natural oil as we age, which is why Jaliman recommends looking out for squalane as one of the ingredients in your moisturizing and anti-aging products. "[It] is an anti-inflammatory lipid, so it reduces redness in the skin. It is also very hydrating," she **added.**

HOW WE CHOSE

To curate this list, **we interviewed 11 dermatologists** to ask for the ingredients to look for in an anti-aging product, and what best practices they recommend for a well-rounded skin care regimen. We then asked some of these dermatologists, as well as some of our skin-savvy Shop TODAY editors, for their anti-aging product favorites. We also pored through dozens of bestselling products on the internet that contain top anti-aging ingredients *and* that have mostly positive verified customer reviews.