

# what is retinol?

Find out if Retinol should be added to your skin care routine!



## story highlights

- Retinol is one of the most powerful and popular ingredients used to help diminish visible wrinkles, fine lines and hyperpigmentation.
- It can also help reduce the appearance of acne by encouraging cell turnover.

Retinol, which is a retinoid – a form of Vitamin A – is hands down the industry’s gold standard ingredient for reversing the signs of skin aging. It has the power to help accelerate skin renewal and reduce the appearance of wrinkles, fine lines and age spots for firmer, smoother and more even-toned skin. Retinol can also help reduce the appearance of acne by helping prevent dead skin cells from clogging pores.

## why is retinol used?

Skin aging occurs for a number of reasons, from environmental factors to stress and natural aging. As skin ages, cell turnover and collagen production slow down. Visible signs of skin aging (spots, fine lines, wrinkles, etc.) appear as a result of our skin’s natural defense mechanisms, and due to slower cell renewal and skin recovery. Retinol is an excellent treatment choice for premature aging because it can help accelerate skin renewal to diminish the appearance of aging.

## how does retinol work on skin?

Retinol encourages skin cell turnover and renewal. This gives skin a smoother, more even-toned appearance. In order to tolerate Retinol, skin often has to build up what are called retinoid receptors first. These receptors are proteins that are naturally found in skin, and they help Retinol do its work. Skin can build retinoid receptors through controlled exposure, which is why it’s often recommend to start slow with retinol products and build up to higher concentrations.

## types of retinol

Retinol belongs to a family called retinoids, forms of Vitamin A that help increase cell turnover and accelerate skin renewal, effectively evening out discoloration and smoothing the damage that occurs during skin aging.

The most powerful effects of retinoids are on collagen! Retinoids have a dual effect here: they help to decrease the amount of collagen breakdown from sun exposure and they stimulate the production of new collagen.

- **Retinoic Acid** is a type of retinoid that is available through a prescription in forms such as Isotretinoin and Tretinoin, but has the most potential for skin irritation.
- **Retinol** is the strongest retinoid available without a prescription. While still highly effective, Retinol is about 20% weaker than Retinoic Acid and is slowly converted into Retinoic Acid by skin. This also means there is less skin irritation than with Retinoic Acid.
- **Retinyl Palmitate, Retinyl Propionate** and **Retinyl Acetate** are the mildest retinoids, also known as retinyl esters. They take longer to convert to Retinoic Acid, and carry a minimal risk of skin irritation.
- **Microencapsulated Retinol** Some forms of Retinol are microencapsulated, which helps stabilize the Retinol to ensure maximum potency. Microencapsulated Retinol also creates an invisible shield on the skin’s surface to help reduce moisture loss, which is critical for reducing the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines.

## how to use retinol

- Begin using Retinol gradually: slowly building up your skin’s tolerance helps avoid and reduce irritation. Start by using it once every week, then every other day, then ultimately every day.
- Apply Retinol at night to avoid irritation from sun exposure.
- During the day, always use sunscreen to help protect your skin against sun exposure.
- Avoid other exfoliants unless they are designed to be used with Retinol in the same product and your skin therapist/doctor says it’s okay.
- Avoid Retinol if you’re pregnant or breastfeeding.

## does retinol cause peeling, breakouts or redness?

It can take up to several weeks for your skin to get used to Retinol. In the meantime, you may experience flaking and small bumps that resemble breakouts, as well as other forms of sensitivity. This is normal and should stop once your skin builds up its retinoid receptors. Some people call this a “purge” period, but it’s really your skin building up its receptors through controlled exposure

## does retinol cause spots?

Retinol does not cause age spots (hyperpigmentation); in fact, it is used to help decrease their appearance. However, Retinol does make your skin more sensitive to the sun, so you need to wear sunscreen and reapply frequently if you are on a Retinol skin care regimen. Any sun damage can undo your progress and lead to more spots and other signs of skin aging.