

# RETINOL DOES A LOT OF REALLY GOOD THINGS FOR THE SKIN—IT'S THE DESERT ISLAND INGREDIENT

## AGING

**THE FACTS:** Depending on your love of the sun and on your skin tone—wrinkles develop the fastest on the fairest of them all—fine lines could emerge as early as your late 20s. As your skin's turnover rate gets increasingly lethargic with time, you'll begin to notice an all-over dullness, since dead cells aren't naturally sloughing off as quickly as they once did to reveal the fresh, glowy ones underneath. Dark circles may become more noticeable as the under-eye skin thins. Finally, the production of pigment-making cells increases with age, ushering in the arrival of dark spots.

**THE FIX:** The same ingredient popular for battling breakouts earns top marks for fighting signs of aging. "Retinol is probably the most well-studied vitamin A anti-aging product around," says Dr. Graf. "It does a lot of really good things for the skin—it's the desert island ingredient and people should be using it." Likewise, Dr. Lydia Evans, New York dermatologist and consultant to L'Oréal, points out that retinol "addresses all of the major problems that come with aging," including pumping up collagen production and exfoliating to amp up radiance. While prescription retinoids are not recommended for pregnant women, over-the-counter retinol is fine, says Dr. Baxter. Alternatively, **glycolic acid** is another dermatologist favourite for its skin-smoothing skills, she adds, and **caffeine** may help temporarily diminish the look of under-eye circles. If your previous devil-may-care forays in the sun have left dark patches, Dr. Graf says you can fade them and brighten up skin with retinol, as well as **vitamin C**, **kojic acid** or **soy**. Since ingredients such as retinol and glycolic acid can make skin more vulnerable to UV damage, a sunscreen is an everyday essential.

**FLARE PICKS:** Clarins Sunscreen Control Cream For Face SPF 50+, \$34. L'Oréal Revitalift Clinical Repair 10 Day Treatment, \$30. Garnier Skin Renew Dark Spot Corrector, \$20. □



**Q** *Am I using my skin care products at the right time and in the right order?*

**A:** If you have an ever-expanding arsenal of lotions and potions, figuring out how and when to apply them can be trickier than layering a just-right ensemble. Begin with a basic routine, advises Dr. Benjamin Barankin, medical director and co-founder of the Toronto Dermatology Centre, and then if you have a specific concern, add active ingredients as needed. A **CLEANSER** is the obvious first step; apply with your hands and rinse with warm water. Exfoliate once or twice a week unless you have oily skin (in which case you can do it more often) or sensitivity (rosacea sufferers should do it rarely, if ever). Whether you use a **GRAINY SCRUB**, **ALPHA- or BETA-HYDROXY ACIDS** or just a **FACE CLOTH** is a matter of personal preference—but to avoid irritation, don't double up on exfoliating methods. You'll also get better results if you buff away dead skin cells at night before using other treatments. "It will allow the active agents to penetrate more deeply," says Dr. Barankin. **MASKS** and **TONERS** are optional, although the latter can help dry up pimples and excess oil. Once skin is clean and dry, apply any products containing active ingredients first, and start with the most lightweight, liquidy textures (which are the most fast-absorbing). That means a thin layer of your **BENZOYL PEROXIDE** or **SALICYLIC ACID** treatment (if you're acne-prone), any **PRESCRIPTION PRODUCTS**, or your **SERUM** of choice. For anti-aging, Dr. Barankin recommends ones with **VITAMIN C** or **RETINOL**—but don't use any retinoid in combination with glycolic acid, as you could cause inflammation. Let them soak in for as long as you can—at least one minute—before applying a non-comedogenic **MOISTURIZER**. During the day, however, opt for an **SPF 30** or higher with a built-in moisturizer. "Layering sunscreen on top of moisturizer can cause breakouts," explains Dr. Barankin. Be diligent about protection if you're using retinoids, which increase sun sensitivity, or antioxidants, which break down when exposed to sunlight. —Michelle Villett