

BEAUTY LAB

RETINOL REVAMPED

DERMATOLOGISTS CROWN IT AS THE GOLD STANDARD OF SKIN CARE. IF YOU TRIED IT, PEELED, AND GAVE UP, NOW IS THE TIME TO REVISIT. HERE'S WHY. BY ERIN REIMEL

You: I want to reduce fine lines, get rid of acne, fade age spots, smooth texture, and firm skin. Your dermatologist: Use a retinol. This derivative of vitamin A may be the closest you can get to a miracle ingredient. But it's notorious for leaving skin red, flaky, and sensitive. So if you've tried it before, there's a chance it didn't work for you. "Irritation is caused as your skin adjusts to the increased cell turnover that retinol generates," says dermatologist Annie Chiu, M.D. This is normal, but no one wants a painful, peeling face. "And now you don't need to suffer," she says. Read on for three new, gentler options.

THE OG PRESCRIPTION

Retinoic acid, which only a doc can give you, attaches itself to receptors in the skin that affect the cells' gene expression, says Frauke Neuser, Ph.D., the principal scientist at Olay. New cells form and push to the skin's surface, increasing turnover. "It puts your skin in its optimum state," Neuser says. But because it's so effective, start slow. "Apply a pea-size amount every other night, then work up to applying it nightly," Dr. Chiu says.

THE BETTER OTC

The subset of retinoids (including retinol) found over the counter have always had a reputation for being weaker than retinoic acid. Retinol is unstable, so its effectiveness can degrade quickly when exposed to heat, oxygen, or UV rays if not formulated carefully, Neuser says. But the newest retinols combat that and employ innovations like slow-release technology, which lets the active ingredient penetrate each layer of skin over 24 hours to avoid irritation (find it in Olay Regenerist Retinol24 Night Serum, \$29, drugstores). You can also pick your strength based on your skin's tolerance: SkinCeuticals offers three creams, in

concentrations of 0.3, 0.5, and 1 percent (\$67 to \$88, skinceuticals.com). Or try a retinol that's housed in a hydrating formula like an oil (try Neutrogena Rapid Wrinkle Repair Retinol Oil, \$25, drugstores).

THE ALTERNATIVE

A natural, vegan ingredient called bakuchiol, derived from the Indian babchi plant, can potentially deliver the same benefits as retinol, according to a study published in the *British Journal of Dermatology*. It triggers cells the same way retinol does, increasing turnover and decreasing wrinkles and hyperpigmentation, Dr. Chiu says, without drying out the skin or causing irritation. ■

SMOOTH MOVE
Retinols improve skin texture and pore size.



GENTLE BY NATURE

Use this Burt's Bees Renewal Firming Moisturizing Cream (\$20), made with bakuchiol, to help reduce the look of fine lines and wrinkles without the side effects of retinol.

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