

6 Anti-Aging Beauty Products That Actually Make You Look Older



Talk about betrayal. The products you're using in an effort to maintain your youthful skin can actually make you look older. The good news? In some cases, simply tweaking how you use them can turn back the clock. And in others, swapping in different products will do the trick. Here's your guide to purging your medicine cabinet of these beauty backstabbers.

Irony at its worst: Retinol, the ultimate wrinkle-repairer, can actually add years if you use it incorrectly. Going overboard on the potent ingredient (known to cause irritation and dryness at high concentrations) can dry out your skin and make your wrinkles look more noticeable, says Rebecca Kazin, MD, a board-certified dermatologist at the Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery in Washington, D.C. Avoid this side effect by using no more than a pea-sized amount of retinol cream or serum on your entire face a few times a week. You can gradually add a day per week as long as you don't notice any irritation, but if applying it just a few days a week leaves your skin feeling overly tight or dry, ask your dermatologist for a product with a lower percentage of retinol.

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Your morning scrub

Few beauty products offer the instant gratification of scrubs. But regularly using heavy-duty exfoliators with ingredients like ground seeds and crystals can be too abrasive, causing chronic inflammation and even accelerating the aging process, says Elizabeth Tanzi, MD, co-director of the Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery in Washington, D.C. As your skin ages, however, frequent, gentle exfoliation becomes more important for a healthy glow, so don't skip it altogether. Just switch to a gentle cream exfoliant like Beautycounter's Gentle Exfoliator Polishing Cream (\$30, beautycounter.com), which contains non-abrasive jojoba beads and hydrating coconut oil.

Your face wash



Foaming face washes are best left to the young. These products' high levels of surfactants strip the natural oils from skin, dulling your complexion and drawing attention to small wrinkles you wouldn't even notice otherwise, says Rachel Nazarian, MD, a dermatologist at The Clear Clinic and Schweiger Dermatology Group in New York City and New Jersey. Trade the bubbles in for a hydrating cream cleanser with moisturizing ceramides, like CeraVe's Hydrating Cleanser (\$13, [ulta.com](https://www.ulta.com)), that help support your skin's protective barrier.

Your brightening peel

Think of these peels as the cheesecake of the skin-care world: It's fine to indulge every once in a while, but do it with any frequency and you won't like the result. Brightening agents like alpha hydroxy acids and hydroquinone can make skin more sensitive to sun damage, resulting in more age-revealing brown spots and ultimately defeating the purpose of using them in the first place, says Paul Jarrod Frank, MD, founder and director of the Fifth Avenue Dermatology Surgery and Laser Center in New York City. Escape the vicious cycle by tackling spots with botanical brighteners that don't come with sun sensitivity as a side effect, like the licorice root extract in Tatcha's Deep Brightening Serum (\$39, [tatcha.com](https://www.tatcha.com)).

MORE: [7 Anti-Aging Beauty Treatments You Can Make At Home](#)

Your old sunscreen

If you pull out the same bottle of sunscreen season after season, you might not be getting any protection at all from the sun's collagen-damaging rays, says Stafford Broumand, MD, a New York City-based plastic surgeon and associate clinical professor of plastic surgery at the Mount Sinai Hospital. So it's a good thing that sunscreen, which is technically an over-the-counter drug, is required by the FDA to declare its expiration date (generally two years from the day it was bottled) on the bottle.

Your toner

Well, not just your toner. "Any product containing alcohol can dry the skin out and strip it of oils that provide hydration and help maintain the barrier between your skin and outside irritants," says Eric Schweiger, MD, medical director and founder of The Clear Clinic and Schweiger Dermatology Group. The result? You're left looking more raisin than grape. The dehydrating ingredient pops up in everything from face wipes to makeup remover, so check the label and switch to an alcohol-free alternative. One to try: Neutrogena's Alcohol-Free Toner (\$7, [neutrogena.com](https://www.neutrogena.com)).