

This Is How To Have Great Skin All Summer Long, According To Top Derms



Erika Stalder
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Festival season has kicked off and spring break has come and gone, which, in beauty land, signals more than a return to '90s [space buns](#) and a re-up on spray tans: Summer is about to happen, meaning it's about to get hot AF. Some beauty adjustments are intuitive this time of year, like having an elastic at the ready to pull hair off of sweaty skin. But knowing how to pivot in the skin care department is a much trickier game.

Take some of our top workhorse ingredients, like retinol and alpha and beta hydroxy acids. These actives are known to make skin more photosensitive. Does that mean we have to shelve them once happy hour-ing turns into an outdoor affair? And then there's the comfort factor: Anyone who has partied in Coachella Valley knows how quickly skin can turn dry and flakey in warm, arid conditions — and how gross it can feel to apply a heavy cream as a remedy. To find out exactly what kind of moves we need to make to get the most of our must-have actives, we pried into the minds of six dermatologists who seem to know it all. Ahead, get their top recommendations for how to use acids, sunscreen, moisturizers, retinol, and vitamin C come summer months.

RETINOL

The Ingredient: Retinol

By now, it's been hammered into our heads that using a retinol or retinoid is a must-do step in any adult human's skin-care regimen. That's because the vitamin A derivative basically does it all, creating cellular changes in the skin to help control acne, reduce hyperpigmentation, slow the development of fine lines, and smooth the surface. Of course, anyone who has suffered from redness, flaking, and irritation knows that the ingredient can be a tricky one to use, particularly in sunnier months. New York-based cosmetic dermatologist [Paul Jarrod Frank](#), MD, says we should absolutely continue to use retinol during the summertime, just with a few little tweaks.



How To Use It

That big ball of fire in the sky and retinol are not great bedfellows. So Dr. Frank advises using retinoids only at night, particularly in the summer months. "These products will encourage cell turnover and leave the skin smooth and exfoliated," he says, noting that retinols also make skin photosensitive and susceptible to more damage and pigmentation if used in the AM. "Night time is best so that the products do not interfere with day time products such as makeup and sunscreen, especially during the summer." Let's face it: Retinols are among the most expensive products in our skin care arsenal. (**Though they don't have to be.**) To get the most of your investment, Dr. Frank suggests trying a retinol in a serum form, and offers these instructions: "Wash and dry both your hands and face before applying a retinol, then apply a thin layer of the medication to the face, avoiding pimples. Wait until the treated area is dry before applying a nighttime moisturizer," he says.

Resurface by Shani Darden Retinol Reform, \$95, available at [Shani Darden](#).



Pair It With This

In hot, sticky weather, alpha and beta hydroxy acids are a must for helping exfoliate and clear skin. But Dr. Frank warns against piling on retinol after using these acids, a move that can invite major skin irritation. That means saving at-home peels for nights on which you take a break from retinol. The rule even applies to the use of AHA/BHA-containing cleansers. “If you have to use an AHA/BHA Cleanser, use it in the AM and then the retinol at night,” he says. For nights you do use a retinol product, reach for a balancing cleanser that swaps alpha and beta hydroxy acids for skin-clearing monolaurin, antioxidants, and hydrating virgin coconut oil.

VMV Hypoallergenic Hydra Balance Gentle Cream Cleanser, \$22, available at [VMV Hypoallergenic](#).