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FASHION ISSUE

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THE SEASON'S BEST BAG & SHOES



IF WE WERE ABLE to design our own version of the fountain of youth, you'd better believe it would spout vitamin C. Numerous studies have shown that this antioxidant is one of the best anti-agers on the market, effective at obliterating dark spots, stimulating collagen production, diminishing fine lines, and boosting radiance. "Vitamin C is the single most powerful, multi-functional topical ingredient you can use," says Benjamin Fuchs, a pharmacist, cosmetic chemist, and founder of Truth Treatment Systems skin care. "It can actually penetrate, be absorbed, and be utilized in fibroblasts of the skin."

WHAT TO BUY Serums deliver the most bang for your buck, as they are generally formulated with the highest concentrations of vitamin C, a.k.a. ascorbic acid. Unfortunately, a lot of products that boast having vitamin C's superpowers are ineffectual because their concentrations aren't high enough, so be sure to read the label. A good place to start is with a formula that contains at least 15 percent L-ascorbic acid, considered the gold standard, and is high up on the list of ingredients, says cosmetic chemist Ni'Kita Wilson (see box below: **1, 2, 6**). "That is the ideal level—not only do you get the anti-aging benefits but you also get a healthy glow."

Some newer vitamin C derivatives are as beneficial as the original, without the constraints. Studies on 3-O-Ethyl ascorbic acid (**3**) and tetrahexyldecyl ascorbate (**4, 5**) indicate that these forms are better tolerated on those with sensitive or reactive skin, and are potent at higher—and lower—levels. "Most derivatives don't require high per-

centages to be effective," Wilson explains. They're also less prone to oxidation, or darkening in color. But if oxidation does occur, don't be alarmed. "If it oxidizes, it's not going to harm your skin—it's just not going to help you," says Charlene DeHaven, M.D., an internist and clinical director of Innovative Skincare.

Even better is when your serum is cocktailed with additional age-defying ingredients. Ferulic acid (**2, 6**) protects your skin from sun damage, a major cause of premature aging. Niacinamide (**3**) and vitamin E (often listed as tocopherol) (**4, 6**) have anti-inflammatory properties, while copper peptides (**1**) firm your skin, increase its density, and improve elasticity.

HOW TO USE IT All of our experts agree that for most women, the optimal youth-boosting skin-care protocol involves using a vitamin C serum for day and a retinoid of your choice at night. (We are big believers in prescription-strength Retin-A, but StriVectin Advanced Retinol Concentrated Serum, \$119, is a solid, and gentle, over-the-counter option.) The retinoid helps speed exfoliation and cell turnover, which enables your vitamin C product to work even better.

After cleansing in the morning, apply a few drops of your serum to damp skin, covering both your face and neck, followed by your preferred sunscreen (with at least SPF 30, of course). For an improvement in overall radiance and skin texture, expect to start seeing results after about three weeks of regular use; for wrinkles and hyperpigmentation, eight to 12 weeks, depending on the severity. ■

RADIANT SKIN

Want to look lit from within? The secret is vitamin C. By Anne-Marie Guarnieri



BAZAAR LOVES

- 1. IS Clinical by Innovative Skincare Super Serum** Advanced, \$145. **2. Drunk Elephant C-Firma Day Serum**, \$80. **3. Dr. Dennis Gross C+ Collagen Brighten & Firm Vitamin C Serum**, \$78.
- 4. SkinMedica Vitamin C + E Complex**, \$102. **5. Truth Treatment Systems Truth Serum**, \$199.
- 6. SkinCeuticals C E Ferulic**, \$163.

SEE WHERE TO BUY FOR SHOPPING DETAILS