



THE GUIDE  
beauty

## **SPEND LESS, GET MORE**

For the ultimate, expert-vetted skin-care routine, look no further than your local drugstore.

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# When

REAL SIMPLE CHALLENGED seasoned dermatologists to design tip-top skin-care routines using mostly drugstore products, it wasn't much of a challenge at all. Turns out, the aisles are packed with effective-yet-affordable formulas that beget healthy skin. Layer on one (or two) specialty products the dermatologists swear by, throw away a few superfluous items that you thought you needed (but don't!), and your regimen is complete.



This Olay ProX cleansing brush (\$35 at drugstores) lives up to the buzz.

## SKIN TYPE

### Normal or combination

**Of all the types, your skin is the easiest to care for because you don't have a chronic condition (like acne) to manage. "I tell my normal-skin patients to keep their skin-care routines basic, because their skin behaves well on its own," says Jill Waibel, M.D., director of the Miami Dermatology & Laser Institute.**

## YOUR DRUGSTORE PRODUCTS

**CLEANSER:** "You don't even need to wash twice a day," says Heather Rogers, M.D., a cofounder of Modern Dermatology, in Seattle. "Your skin naturally acts as a barrier, keeping out the bad stuff, like dirt and pollution. When people overcleanse their faces and suds up too often, it strips skin of the good stuff—the oils that keep your complexion balanced. Just wash with water in the morning." You should, however, take the time to cleanse every night. "At the end of the day," she says, "you have to get all that grime and makeup off your face, even if you don't worry about breakouts. Otherwise nighttime treatments can't penetrate the skin." Rogers recommends **Eucerin Gentle Hydrating Cleanser** (\$6 at drugstores) because it foams and rinses away easily.

**SUNSCREEN:** "I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to apply sunscreen every single day," says Elizabeth Hale, M.D., a codirector of CompleteSkinMD, in Manhattan. "And using foundation with sunscreen doesn't count. You have to use a separate sun-blocking product." Because daily application means you'll go through a bottle rapidly, it makes sense to go with a fairly affordable option, and there are plenty. Try **L'Oréal Paris Age Perfect Hydra-Nutrition SPF 30 Day Lotion** (\$20 at drugstores).

**RETINOID:** Retinoids help correct skin damage that has already occurred. Many dermatologists agree that topical vitamin A is the best anti-aging ingredient we have to date. And because normal-to-combination skin is better able than other types to tolerate this potentially irritating



ingredient, you have a wider range of options, many of which are inexpensive. One cream often cited for its efficacy and affordability: **ROC Retinol Correxion Deep Wrinkle Night Cream** (\$23 at drugstores), which is meant to be applied before bed.

**CLEANSING BRUSH:** Rogers and Robyn Gmyrek, M.D., of Union Square Laser Dermatology, in New York City, both agree that those with combination skin, in particular, will reap big rewards by incorporating a brush into their regular routines. Why? Combination skin has a split personality, and the regimen outlined on these pages is geared more toward the normal half. Deep cleansing the T-zone with a brush two times a week can help keep that combination area clear of clogs. Then use the brush a third time each week, over the whole face, to remove dead skin cells. This will leave your skin smooth and pave the way for antioxidant and retinoid products. Try the **Olay Professional ProX Advanced Cleansing System** (\$35 at drugstores).

#### YOUR SPECIALTY PRODUCT

**ANTIOXIDANT SERUM:** No matter your skin type, you should use an antioxidant product at least once a day, because it's one of the first lines of defense the body uses to fight free radicals caused by environmental assaults, like ultraviolet (UV) rays and pollution, says Hale. (It's the damage from sun and smog that can cause fine lines and sun spots.) But not all antioxidant serums are created equal. Unlike cleansers and basic moisturizers, effective antioxidant serums are probably going to cost more than \$30. "Antioxidants are pricey and

## Get the most for your money

One key to economical skin care is learning how to use products properly. That means not slathering on a quarter-size dollop when a dime-size drop will do—or layering products in the wrong order, preventing penetration of whatever lands on top. So what's the right approach? Read on.

#### DON'T OVERDOSE.

To minimize waste, heed these guidelines from dermatologist Elizabeth Hale: You need no more than a nickel-size squirt of cleanser and facial moisturizer; two pea-size drops of an antioxidant serum; one pea-size drop of retinoid cream; a dime-size dollop of eye cream (half a dime per eye); and about a quarter-size pump of facial sunscreen.

"Using sunscreen now helps you avoid major spending on age-reversing treatments, like lasers or surgery, later on," says Elizabeth Hale.

#### APPLY IN THE RIGHT SEQUENCE.

Think thin to thick—serum, lotion, cream. The exception: If you're using a chemical sunscreen, that should go on first, before any other product, since the sunscreen has to be absorbed to be effective. Applying anything else first may prevent that.

#### DRY YOUR HANDS...

Warm, wet skin quickly absorbs anything you put on it, so make sure your hands are clean and dry before massaging in any facial products. Otherwise your fingertips may end up being the best-treated skin on your body.

#### ...BUT DAMPEN YOUR FACE.

It's helpful to apply an antioxidant serum after washing, because damp skin is very absorbent, and this will accelerate penetration. Exception to the rule: Don't apply a retinoid to wet skin, since quick absorption in that case can lead to irritation.

hard to stabilize," says Tina West, M.D., the director of the West Institute, in Chevy Chase, Maryland. "Finding an antioxidant for \$10 is no bargain, because it's unlikely to work." So for this product, you'll need to step out of the drugstore and splurge online. One formula doctors swear by: **SkinMedica Vitamin C + E Complex** (\$98, skinmedica.com), which leaves skin with a slightly matte finish—good for shine control.

#### JUST SKIP IT

**MOISTURIZER:** "Most women with normal or combination skin don't really need a hydrating lotion in addition to a hydrating sunscreen," says Gmyrek. An inexpensive, SPF-laced lotion: **Aveeno Absolutely Ageless Daily Moisturizer Broad Spectrum SPF 30** (\$20 at drugstores). Same goes for your nighttime routine; choosing a retinoid with a richer base means you don't need to spring for a separate moisturizing lotion. The exception: During the winter, you may want an extra layer of moisture to prevent or combat chapping. In that case, a simple drugstore formula will do. Try **CeraVe Facial Moisturizing Lotion PM** (\$14 at drugstores), which can be applied as needed. **Note:** If your under-eyes are feeling dry, too, the CeraVe lotion can be safely tapped on that area; no need to buy a separate eye product.

#### SKIN TYPE

##### Oily/acne-prone

"Many women with oily or blemish-prone skin use too many products," says Waibel. The motivation is obvious: You're trying to stem relentless oil production and prevent annoy-

ing breakouts. However, over-diligence can exacerbate both issues. “When you overstrip oil, your sebaceous glands start pumping out more sebum, because they think your skin is dry,” says Waibel. And, she says, “all those active acne ingredients can cross-react, leading to redness and irritation.” Simplifying your routine cuts costs and improves your complexion.

### YOUR DRUGSTORE PRODUCTS

**CLEANSER:** “A gentle, foaming cleanser, used twice a day, is all you need,” says Rogers, who warns against using anything with acne-fighting ingredients in the morning. “I want patients to be able to tolerate an acne-fighting lotion at night, and using a strong cleanser may be too aggressive,” she says. Her pick: **CeraVe Foaming Facial Cleanser** (\$12 at drugstores).

**SUNSCREEN:** “There are lots of effective sunscreen options in drugstores. Like cleansers, these are products that don’t require you to fork over a lot of money,” says Hale, who likes **Coppertone ClearlySheer Faces SPF 30** (\$9 at drugstores), which leaves a matte finish. If your skin is very broken out, some dermatologists recommend going with a physical block, like zinc oxide or titanium dioxide, rather than a chemical sunscreen, because blocks have anti-inflammatory properties and can help reduce the redness and irritation associated with acne. Try **Neutrogena Pure & Free Baby Sunscreen SPF 60** (\$12 at drugstores).

Hypoallergenic and fragrance- and oil-free, this SPF won’t exacerbate zits.



Drugstore containers tend to be larger than those you find at department stores, and that means you don’t have to skimp on the amount you apply.

### YOUR SPECIALTY PRODUCTS

**ANTIOXIDANT SERUM:** The same reasoning mentioned in the normal-skin category applies here. “Regardless of your skin type, in order to ensure that you’re getting an antioxidant formula that is both stable and effective, you need to pay a bit more,” says West. One formula that is doctor-vetted and won’t clog pores: **SkinCeuticals Serum 20 AOX+** (\$119, [skinceuticals.com](http://skinceuticals.com)). You should put it on in the morning, because the daytime is when you need the most protection. But if you have very oily skin, morning application of some products may make you feel too tacky. In that case, find an antioxidant that comes in gel form to avoid that feeling.

**RETINOID:** Not only are retinoids great anti-agers “but there’s also no better treatment for acne than a retinoid,” says Rogers. As with the antioxidant serum, many dermatologists say it’s worthwhile to pay a bit more for a proven (non-drugstore) formula when you’re battling both acne and aging, especially since that’s the only nighttime treatment you need. A prescription-strength formula would probably be the most effective. “The closest you can get to that in an over-the-counter product is **SkinCeuticals Retinol 1.0** [\$70, [skinceuticals.com](http://skinceuticals.com)]. Because it’s the strongest product available over the counter, that necessitates starting slowly to avoid irritation,” says Rogers. Apply to dry skin after washing or over your antioxidant

serum, if you choose to use a serum before bed. Rogers points out that you need to use only a pea-size drop of most retinoid creams. The amount is so small, most tubes will last almost a year, so even a \$120 tube translates to about \$10 a month. (Pay attention to the expiration date. Even though the product may still work, it may be weaker.)

You can expect to see results from using a retinoid after two to three months.

### JUST SKIP THESE

**TONER:** Oily-skin types often apply an astringent toner in an effort to curb oil. Fight the urge, says Gmyrek, as many contain skin-drying alcohol, which can lead to oil overproduction and irritation.

**MOISTURIZER:** “I tell my patients, ‘If your kitchen sink is clogged, you don’t throw more food down the drain,’” says Waibel. Like people with normal or combination skin, those with oily or acne-prone skin probably don’t need a separate moisturizer. You’ll get enough hydration from sunblock during the day and your anti-aging treatment at night. Just make sure you’re using one with a creamy base.

### SKIN TYPE

#### Dry or sensitive

**This skin type typically has barrier issues, which is why moisture is hard to hold on to and irritants are**

**more likely to get in. Therefore it can become easily inflamed. So it’s important to be cautious and use only a handful of products that are effective but gentle. Less is truly more. (You’re welcome.)**

### YOUR DRUGSTORE PRODUCTS

**CLEANSER:** “You want something creamy and soothing, without any active ingredients, like acids,” says Gmyrek. Try **Yes to Coconut Ultra Hydrating Creme Cleanser** (\$10 at drugstores) or **Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser** (\$14 at drugstores). Wash in the evenings but skip the mornings to avoid overstripping your skin (and to make your cleanser last longer).



**MOISTURIZER:** Even if you use a relatively moisturizing sunscreen (see our pros' pick in the specialty section, below), it probably won't provide enough hydration for your skin during the day. At the drugstore, look for a moisturizer containing at least one of these highly effective hydrating ingredients: hyaluronic acid (which helps skin hold more moisture, longer) and ceramides (which help repair tattered skin barriers to keep moisture in more effectively). Try **Skin + Pharmacy Advanced Anti-Aging Therapy Intensive Hydration Cream** (\$20 at drugstores) with hyaluronic acid or **CeraVe Moisturizing Cream** (\$15 at drugstores) with ceramides. Apply before sunscreen in the morning and after your anti-aging retinoid (below).

**EYE CREAM:** Because your skin is so dry, your under-eye area is probably parched, too. And while many doctors think a face cream can work just fine there, your propensity toward sensitivity calls for something made specifically for delicate under-eye skin. Try **Burt's Bees Sensitive Eye Cream** (\$18 at drugstores).

#### YOUR SPECIALTY PRODUCTS

**SUNSCREEN:** Those with dry or sensitive skin require a sunscreen that ticks off a lot of boxes: creamy and physical. Dermatologists say that for the best version of this, you'll need to spend a little more. Opt for a creamy sunscreen to ensure that your skin isn't missing another opportunity to hydrate. Also, look for a formula with a physical sunblock, like zinc oxide or titanium



This best-selling soap-free formula is safe for rosacea-prone skin.

Slather this onto skin without water for a balmlike feel, then rinse.

many dermatologists' medicine cabinets. Apply in the morning before your moisturizer and sunscreen.

dioxide, rather than a chemical sunscreen, like avobenzone (also called Parsol 1789). This is because blocks sit on top of the skin, rather than getting absorbed into it, making them less apt to irritate these sensitive-skin types. One that fits the bill: **EltaMD UV Facial Broad-Spectrum SPF 30+** (\$24, [lovelyskin.com](http://lovelyskin.com)).

**ANTIOXIDANT SERUM:** Although your skin craves moisture, many dermatologists say you're still better off with an antioxidant serum, as opposed to a cream, because there's some concern that creamy humectants may impede the skin's ability to absorb the antioxidants. **SkinCeuticals C E Ferulic** (\$162, [skinceuticals.com](http://skinceuticals.com)) is a formula you're apt to find in

**RETINOID:** "Your skin has fewer oils to act as a buffer against retinoids, so you need to use one for sensitive skin," says Rogers. Her pick: **Avène RetrinAL 0.05 Cream** (\$61, [dermstore.com](http://dermstore.com)). Minimize irritation by applying it twice a week, then work your way toward more frequent applications, followed by moisturizer if you have flaking.

#### JUST SKIP IT

**HARSH SCRUBS:** Gently sloughing away dry skin helps moisture penetrate the skin better. And because dry-skin types often experience flakes, this is tempting. But grainy exfoliators that contain beads, enzymes, or acids can dry out and irritate your skin. Instead, once a week, use a washcloth and a gentle cleanser to remove dead skin cells.