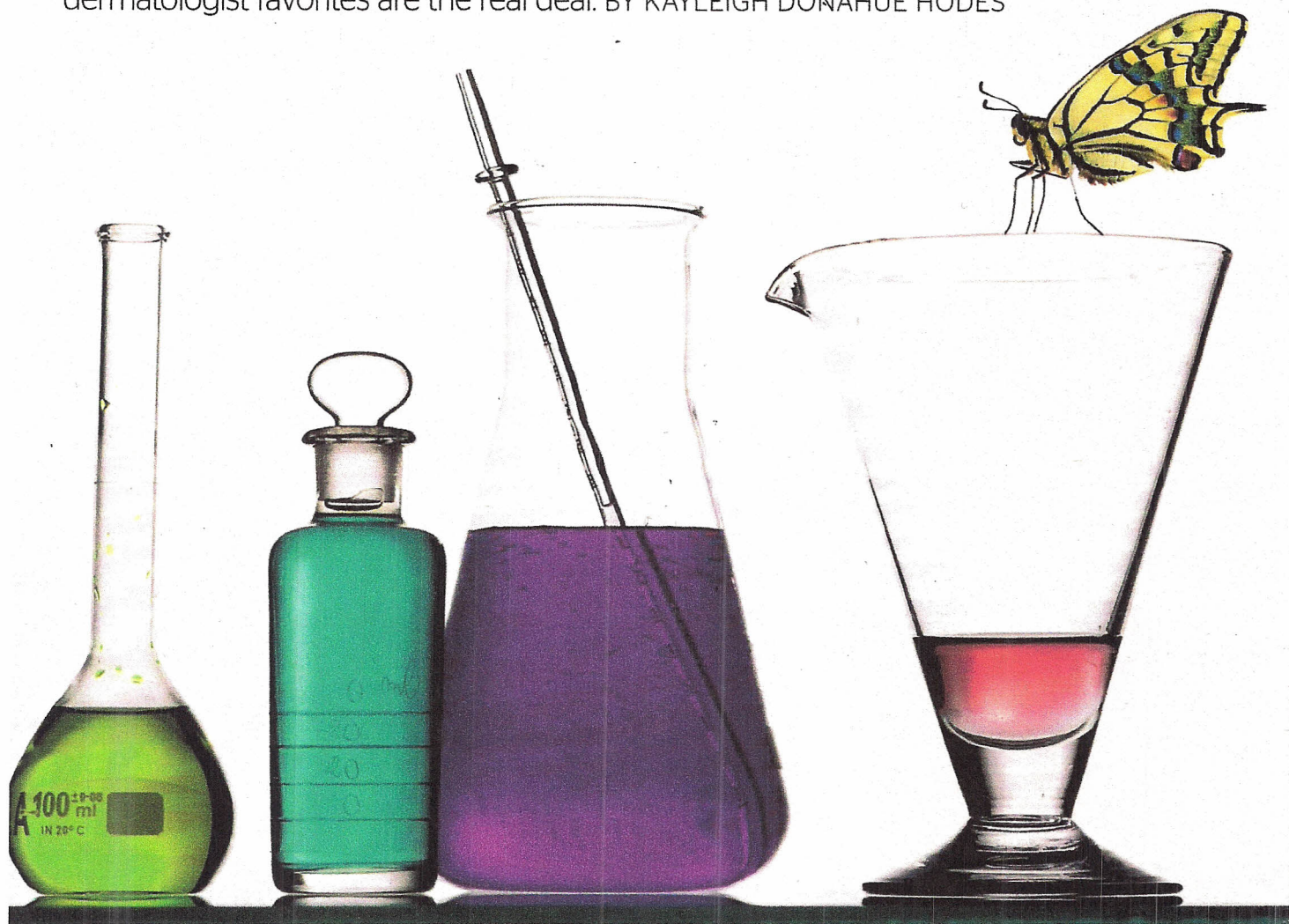


The only anti-agers you need

Every new product claims to be a miracle in a tub, tube, or jar—but these dermatologist favorites are the real deal. BY KAYLEIGH DONAHUE HODES



All of us have been there: You purchase a face cream that promises to whisk your skin back a decade, only to find yourself whisking it into the trash when you realize it doesn't do squat. With hundreds of new anti-aging products hitting stores every year, finding the truly quality formulas can be baffling. So we enlisted top dermatologists to give us honest feedback on what will keep your skin soft, smooth, and bright for years to come, from the tried-and-true ingredients to innovative breakthroughs. "Some of these

newer ingredients can give you similar results to the established anti-agers, but without the side effects," says David E. Bank, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. Just remember that to notice a real difference in your skin, you have to be patient. "It can take four to six months of continued use in order to see results from an anti-aging ingredient," says Bank. But don't feel overwhelmed, because no matter what your concern is, you'll find exactly what you need right here.

Wrinkle fighters

Everything from synthetic snake venom to real placenta (*blech*) has been touted as the next big thing in this category. But to smooth lines and plump skin, you need ingredients that either boost your skin's collagen production or help stop it from breaking down—or both.

THE GOLD STANDARDS

Retinoids, which include retinol and prescription-strength creams like Retin-A, have worn this crown for decades. Derived from vitamin A,

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Skin brighteners and spot faders

Tackling sun spots or melasma (dark blotches that show up on the forehead, cheeks, or upper lip) is tricky. Both issues are hard to get rid of and can come back in a snap. They're caused by a surge in melanin production, which sets pigment-producing skin cells into overdrive. Women who are Asian or who have olive to dark skin tend to be the most susceptible.

THE GOLD STANDARDS

For years, the bleaching agent hydroquinone was the most popular treatment, and a number of dermatologists still stand by it. But the ingredient is banned in many countries, and after one study suggested a possible link to cancer, women began searching for worry-free alternatives. One of the best, say docs, is vitamin C. It's proven to even out skin tone—for the most effective form, “look for L-ascorbic acid or ascorbyl glucoside on the ingredient label; camu camu extract is also rich in vitamin C. Pick a product in a pump bottle to help keep the ingredient stable,” says Karen.

WHERE TO FIND IT: For vitamin C, try Peter Thomas Roth Camu Camu Power C x 30 Vitamin C Brightening Serum, \$85, or L'Oréal Paris Youth Code Dark Spot Correcting & Illuminating Serum Corrector, \$24.99.

these ingredients speed up your skin's natural exfoliation process, which kick-starts new collagen. Prescription retinoids can improve skin in as little as four weeks, while over-the-counter retinol products need at least 12 weeks to work. But retinoids aren't for everyone: In some people, they can set off a slew of skin irritations, including redness, dryness, and flaking. Not only is this annoying, but new research shows that chronic inflammation can actually *increase* skin aging. For a nonirritating option, peptides—amino acids that exist naturally in skin—also boost collagen. Doctors recommend pentapeptides (called Matrixyl on ingredient labels) and copper peptides. **WHERE TO FIND THEM:** For retinol, try Neutrogena Rapid Wrinkle Repair Night Moisturizer, \$19.99. Olay Regenerist Micro-Sculpting Cream, \$25.99, contains Matrixyl.

NEW BREAKTHROUGHS

You know how we said that chronic skin inflammation speeds up aging? Pay attention: Every skin cell contains a protein that reacts when it senses trouble, such as UV rays, pollution, and other aggressors lurking in our environment. When this protein reacts, it triggers inflammation that breaks down collagen. So unless you live in an underground bunker, chances are your skin cells are in a frequent state of reactive frenzy, even if you slather on sunscreen. But a new ingredient called Hexinol may change all that: “It's able to act like a cog in the wheel of inflammation, halting the collagen damage before it occurs,”

says Bank. In studies sponsored by RoC Skincare, which uses the ingredient, 87 percent of people using a Hexinol cream showed improvement in under-eye wrinkles after 16 weeks. Experts say you can, and *should*, use a Hexinol cream in conjunction with other anti-aging products. “It may allow you to use retinol with less irritation,” says Julie Karen, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at New York University Langone Medical Center.

Another new wrinkle buster is Rhamnose, a plant sugar that—in an ironic twist—fights the aging effects of sugar on skin. Turns out, when your body digests sugar, it creates collagen-destroying molecules in your bloodstream. This process is known as glycation. But two recent studies have shown that Rhamnose is able to keep glycation from harming skin cells while *also* triggering new collagen. “What's impressive is that Rhamnose can penetrate into the hard-to-reach second layer of skin, so it affects more change deeper down,” says Emmy Graber, M.D., an assistant professor of dermatology at Boston University School of Medicine. “Retinol is a tough act to follow, but this may come close and be less irritating.”

WHERE TO FIND THEM: Hexinol is exclusive to RoC Skincare; try RoC Multi Correxion 5 in 1 Daily Moisturizer with SPF 30, \$28.99. For Rhamnose, try Vichy LiftActiv Night Cream, \$50. (25 readers will win it; see page 171 for details.)




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A NEW BREAKTHROUGH

While many brightening ingredients work on just one part of the chain reaction that leads to spots and melasma, a new complex called MelaPlex targets all stages of the problem. It has four active ingredients: One puts the brakes on the enzyme that triggers melanin production, another blocks melanin precursors from getting into pigment-producing cells, a third helps halt pigmentation, and the fourth helps prevent sunlight-induced damage. “Together, these components offer a multi-faced approach to inhibiting pigment production,” notes Karen. And while some users of MelaPlex products report burning and dryness initially, this seems to subside after about a month of use. “It’s not as powerful as prescription-strength hydroquinone, but with prolonged use of this ingredient and daily broad-spectrum sunscreen protection, you’ll see more even-toned skin and fewer sun spots, without the safety concerns,” says Karen.

WHERE TO FIND IT: Neocutis Perle Skin Brightening Cream, \$105, contains MelaPlex and is hydroquinone-free.

Antioxidants

Think of antioxidants as Captain America’s super-strength shield for your skin. These ingredients, which typically come from fruits, veggies, plants, and teas, help block free radicals—DNA-destroying molecules spawned by UV rays and pollution—from getting into and damaging your skin cells. Most antioxidants can’t fix damage that’s already done (though vitamins C and E are exceptions), but they’re essential for every skin type to protect and preserve healthy cells.

THE GOLD STANDARDS

Practically every serum and moisturizer today contains some type of antioxidant, but the formula plays a huge role in how effective it is. Most

derms agree that to get your money’s worth, “it’s best to go with a serum, which allows for a higher concentration of antioxidants and helps them absorb into skin better,” says Bank. Some of the most potent antioxidants are vitamins C and E (which, like a superhero duo, are even more powerful when used together), coffeeberry, ferulic acid, and green tea.



WHERE TO FIND THEM: SkinCeuticals C E Ferulic serum, \$153, contains ferulic acid. Philosophy When Hope Is Not Enough Facial Firming Serum, \$45, has vitamins C and E.

A NEW BREAKTHROUGH

Sansho extract, which comes from a Japanese pepper spice, takes free-radical fighting a step further. Not only is the ingredient a super-strength antioxidant, “it can help boost your body’s natural defenses against free radicals,” says Karen. In other words, sansho extract helps your skin protect itself better *before* it needs an antioxidant to come to the rescue. Graber admits that she’d like to see more clinical testing of the ingredient before calling it a hero, “so until then, I’d recommend using it in addition to other antioxidants,” she says.

WHERE TO FIND IT: Sansho extract is currently exclusive to Shiseido—try its Future Solution LX Total Protective Emulsion, \$240.

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