

## NEW BEAUTY®

# What Kind of Retinol Is Right for You?

Liz Ritter, Executive Managing Editor | October 06, 2016



Want to look younger? There's one really powerful anti-aging ingredient, and it goes by a whole bunch of different names. Retinoids, retinol, vitamin A, over-the-counter, prescription and percentages: A lot of terms circulate around this one ingredient and it can get rather confusing. "Retinol is the purest form of vitamin A, and an antioxidant derivative of it," says Amandine Isnard, head of product development for EVE LOM. So how do you know which type is right for you?

### **It Really Depends on Your Skin Type...Plus Your Concerns, Skin Tolerance and How Quickly You Would Like to See Results**

"Prescription retinoids can have a drying effect on the skin because they can be a bit stronger than an OTC product, but are optimal for reversing the signs of aging and acne," says Pepper Pike, OH, plastic surgeon Lu-Jean Feng, MD. "I also take into consideration the lifestyle of the patient. Patients who are not committed to sun protection and safety are not ideal candidates to use retinol." Richland, WA, dermatologist Sidney B. Smith, MD, adds that he recommends an OTC retinol or a prescription retinoid to almost all of his aesthetically conscious patients. "They are just an essential part of a healthy skin care routine."

### **But All the "Retinoids" Will Help**

Las Vegas plastic surgeon Goesel Anson, MD, says what she considers the "retinoids"—vitamin A derivatives including retinoic acid, retinol, retinaldehydes, retinyl esters—are all important topical agents for photoaging. "Retinoic acid (Retin-A) and Renova require a prescription," she explains. "However, retinol is absolutely effective for photo-aging, does not require a prescription, penetrates skin well and may actually be less irritating."

### **And Even a Tiny Bit Can Give You Results**

This is one of those ingredients that has a lot of percentages, but don't let the numbers confuse you. "All percentages will improve the skin, but higher percentages produce faster results," Miami dermatologist Leslie Baumann, MD, explains. "For example, with a higher percentage you can see results in six months, but a lower percentage can take 12 months. I prefer starting patients on 0.25 percent, which isn't the lowest but it's on the lower end of retinol, then increasing them to 0.5 percent and then 1 percent, which is the highest I've seen." Dr. Feng says she has patients start with 0.025 percent tretinoin and then go up from there. "This low dose enables us to evaluate the patient's skin tolerance to the retinoid and develop a customized treatment plan for them to optimize their results."

### **Or Just Go With This Simple Rule**

According to Santa Monica, CA, dermatologist **Ava Shamban, MD**, oily, sun-damaged skin should use a higher strength; sensitive skin should use a lower-strength retinol in combination with a moisturizer. Dr. Anson adds, "Not everyone can tolerate higher concentrations, and that's fine. My advice: Stay below the concentration that results in dryness/flakiness/redness."

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