

redbook

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red BEAUTY / SKIN

SUPER YOUR SKINCARE

Like an extra shot of espresso in your Starbucks order, these potent ingredients help energize your skin routine so it can work harder. Find the one that targets your needs, then add it to your regimen for faster, better results with a free side of radiance.

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY MIKE GARTEN



VITAMIN C

BEST FOR TREATING: Dark spots, uneven skin tone

WHAT IT DOES: Like any supportive partner, vitamin C is both protective and proactive. "It guards skin against the free radical damage that contributes to spots while also working to brighten your complexion and even out tone," says

Ava Shamban, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the UCLA-Geffen School of Medicine. Look for a product with l-ascorbic acid, one of the most effective versions. And if you also use retinol, apply the vitamin C product in the morning and the retinol one in the evening.

PRODUCT TO TRY:

"Vitamin C is sensitive to air and light, so it can quickly lose potency once the bottle is opened," says Dr. Shamban. Pick a serum in a pump to limit air exposure or try one in a nonliquid form, in which the ingredient is more likely to stay fresh. **Mary Kay TimeWise Vitamin C Activating Squares** (\$24 for 12, marykay.com)—they look like clear breath strips—each contain a dose of vitamin C that dissolves when mixed with liquid.

RETINOL

BEST FOR TREATING: Fine lines and wrinkles

WHAT IT DOES: This vitamin A derivative is the Adele of skincare: Everyone on the planet agrees it's a superstar. "Retinol is proven to stimulate collagen, which in turn softens wrinkles, and it helps speed up your skin's own exfoliation process for better tone and texture," says Ellen Marmur, M.D., an associate clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai in New York City. But it's strong stuff, so start slowly (learn how to ease into

retinol on page 52), and if you have sensitive skin, you may want to try a glycolic acid product instead. A pea-size drop of a retinol treatment is all you need to cover your entire face—smooth it on clean, dry skin before using anything else.

PRODUCT TO TRY: The easiest move is to add a serum that contains retinol to your p.m. lineup—just make sure your night cream doesn't contain alpha hydroxy acids, which could cause irritation if used at the same time. Try **Roc Retinol Correxion Deep Wrinkle Serum** (\$23, drugstores).

CHARGE

NIACINAMIDE

BEST FOR TREATING: Visible pores, dullness, sallow skin
WHAT IT DOES: Otherwise known as vitamin B3, niacinamide is found in good-for-you foods like salmon, tuna, and leafy green vegetables—and when applied topically, it's a recipe for healthy skin. "It may help cells with energy and to repair themselves," says Dr. Marmur. "It promotes collagen for smoother, more radiant skin, and it's been shown to reduce pre-cancers." If you're not focused on any particular issue and just want to look more luminous overall, adding a niacinamide product to your regimen can deliver the goods. However, if you're already using a retinol or alpha hydroxy acid product,

or if your skin often gets red, you may want to bypass it. "Most of my patients don't have any reaction to niacinamide, but it can cause a temporary flushing effect, so be cautious if you have rosacea," Dr. Marmur advises.
PRODUCT TO TRY: A booster is a serumlike formula that's designed to be rotated into any skin routine for bonus benefits. We like **Paula's Choice Resist 10% Niacinamide Booster** (\$42, paulaschoice.com).



CHARCOAL

BEST FOR TREATING: Oily or acne-prone skin
WHAT IT DOES: Like the dark knight, charcoal has the ability to swoop in and rescue a shiny or blemished face. "The ingredient acts as a super-sponge to absorb excess oil and reduce that telltale sheen," says Dr. Marmur. Charcoal is safe on most skin types, though you should skip it if you're particularly sensitive, and experts agree that using a charcoal product more than once or twice a week could make skin too dry, so go easy.
PRODUCT TO TRY: A mask allows you to target just the areas where you're shiny. **Bioré Charcoal Self Heating One Minute Mask** (\$8 for four single-use masks, drugstores) doesn't harden, so it is less likely to dry out skin.

BISABOLOL AND COLLOIDAL SULFUR

BEST FOR TREATING: Sensitive skin
WHAT THEY DO: If your complexion is easily irritated, these ultra-soothers are just the TLC you need. "Colloidal sulfur is wonderful for calming redness and can reduce some of the symptoms of rosacea," says Dr. Marmur. Bisabolol is equally great. "It has anti-irritant, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial properties,

plus it's high in panthenol to promote healing," says Elizabeth Bahar Houshmand, M.D., a board-certified dermatologist in Dallas. She notes that both ingredients work well alongside most products, but adds, "Keep in mind that anyone with sensitive skin is better off using as few products as possible!"
PRODUCT TO TRY: You can find each ingredient in skin boosters and serums, and some contain both. **First Aid Beauty Anti-Redness Serum** (\$36, sephora.com) has colloidal sulfur and bisabolol along with anti-inflammatories like ginger, caffeine, and aloe.



STYLIST: ALLIE HOLLOWAY