

allure

I Finally Found the First Hyperpigmentation Treatment That Actually Works on My Skin

BY SHAMMARA LAWRENCE | March 16, 2018



You know what's more annoying than pesky pimples? The acne scars they leave in their wake. For as long as I can remember, I've suffered from insistent dark marks on my face because of my oily, acne-prone skin. Known as post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, they are the pigmented spots left behind following significant inflammation or irritation of the skin. In my case, that stress is caused by my bad habit of picking at every zit that crops up on my face.

Each month, like clockwork, right at the peak of my menstrual cycle, my hormones go haywire and I'm left with a number of whiteheads and blackheads. Even with the decent amount of willpower I'd love to think I have, I always inevitably pick at them the longer they stick around, and consequently, I'm left with a fresh new batch of dark marks that are hard to get rid of because of my brown skin. "Hyperpigmentation lasts longer in darker skin types because the more melanin that is produced, the deeper it sinks into the skin and the harder it is to get rid of," says Lily Talakoub, a dermatologist of McLean Dermatology and Skincare Center in Virginia.

Last summer, I had a particularly spotty month. So much so, that all of the commonly used skin-care tricks I relied on to immediately get rid of my breakouts didn't suffice, and my go-to concealers were no match for the protruding spots. Frustrated, I ignored common skin-care etiquette and popped all of the pimples — even though none of them had come to a head. But, guess what? I paid for it. Big time. Days after my popping session, I began developing terrible discoloration on my cheeks and jawline that left me feeling insecure for weeks.

Living with a host of deeply pigmented spots on my face scarred me both physically and emotionally. Eventually, I knew something had to change. After the shame and guilt subsided, I did what any beauty lover would do — I became obsessive about my skin-care routine. First, I admittedly turned to YouTube, watching countless people talk about their struggles with hyperpigmentation and how they finally got clear skin. From there, I consulted my Allure colleagues whose knowledge on exfoliating alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs) and beta hydroxy acids (BHAs) is unmatched.

Armed with the information I needed, I developed a routine fit for my skin type through trial and error over the course of two weeks. I was determined to get rid of my hyperpigmentation once and for all. After three months, the spots lightened and my complexion evened out as a result of diligently using serums and acids with four particular components known to combat discoloration. The life-changing ingredients? Glycolic acid, vitamin C, hydroquinone, and, believe it or not, snail mucin. (Although these ingredients worked for me, if you're dealing with serious skin issues, before you try these on your own, make an appointment with your dermatologist to find a treatment plan that's best for you.)

Vitamin C

Post-cleansing, I always use a hydrating toner such as Fresh Rose Deep Hydration Facial Toner to hydrate and avoid irritation. I then reach for my holy grail serums, the first being the CosRX Triple Lightening Liquid, which is made with a whopping 20.5 percent vitamin C.

A common antioxidant known for its ability to fight free-radical damage from the sun, vitamin C is also a powerful tool in combating hyperpigmentation, says **William Kwan**, a dermatologist in San Francisco. "Vitamin C has been found to weakly affect an enzyme called tyrosinase," she explains. "This enzyme is an important step in melanin (skin pigment) formation, therefore vitamin C may inhibit its function, thus leading to improvement in irregular pigmentation."

Given its potency, I limited my use of vitamin C-infused serums to three times a week, and skipped it altogether when using anything with glycolic acid since that would reduce its effectiveness.



The results

In the end, while there are still hints of hyperpigmentation on my cheeks and I still get the occasional breakout, my skin's erratic behavior has subsided significantly. I no longer have to rely on wearing medium-to-full-coverage foundations or apply heavy globs of concealer before setting foot outside. I've developed a natural glow that people notice. And most importantly, I've regained my confidence, thanks to being hyper-aware of the products I use on my face. Now my skin-care routine (cleansing, toning, moisturizing, and even masking) has become a necessary form of self-care, and I couldn't be happier.

<https://www.allure.com/story/hyperpigmentation-treatment-snail-mucin-review-before-after-photos>