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The Best Lactic Acid Skin-Care Products, According to Dermatologists

By Kathleen Felton | November 1, 2018



When you hear the words "lactic acid," you might think of that stuff your body produces during exercise. But lactic acid is also a skin-care ingredient that can deliver some seriously impressive benefits for your complexion.

Lactic acid is a lesser-known member of the alpha hydroxy acid (AHA) family (which also includes citric, malic, tartaric, mandelic, and glycolic acids), and is naturally occurring. In fact, "it's the same molecule responsible for the burn you feel in your muscles," says Arash Akhavan, M.D., a dermatologist at the Dermatology and Laser Group in New York City.

You'll spot lactic acid on the ingredient lists of many over-the-counter products, as well as in-office treatments. "It's typically a component of a stand-alone chemical peel, or in conjunction with other alpha or beta hydroxy acids in skin creams or lotions," says Kenneth Mark, M.D., a dermatologist based in New York.

Benefits Of Lactic Acid

Acids, including others in the AHA family, are notorious for their exfoliating powers, and lactic is no exception. "It gently exfoliates to reveal smoother and more glowing skin," says Debra Jaliman, M.D., a dermatologist in New York City and author of *Skin Rules*. Other benefits? Improved skin texture and hyperpigmentation, fewer breakouts, and less-visible lines and wrinkles, she says.

Over time, you might even notice plumper-looking skin, says **Ava Shamban, M.D., a dermatologist in Beverly Hills and founder of SKINxFIVE**. "Studies have shown that [lactic acid] can even out the pigment layer and stimulate collagen production," she says.

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