

Parade

Taking a GLP-1 After 50? Dermatologists Explain What It Can Mean for Your Skin

Laura Beck | September 21, 2026



Getty

There's a moment that happens to a lot of women on GLP-1 medications that is hard to prepare for. Sure, your clothes are looser and you hopefully feel healthier. But then you catch yourself in a certain light and think, *'Why does my face look tired? Are my cheeks a little flatter? Is my jaw a little less defined? Is the skin doing something around the eyes that it wasn't doing six months ago?'* You worked hard for this weight loss, and somehow it doesn't look exactly the way you imagined.

Fortunately, that's not a reason to stop your medication (if you don't want to). Every expert in this piece says some version of that, so let's get it out of the way now. GLP-1 drugs offer real health benefits, and no one should let skin concerns override what their doctor has recommended for their metabolic or cardiovascular health.

But the skin changes are real too, and after 50 specifically, they tend to be more pronounced and more persistent than they would be at 35.

The combination of age-related collagen decline, hormonal shifts from menopause and the rapid volume loss that GLP-1 medications can accelerate creates a specific set of skin challenges that deserve a real conversation—not just reassurance.

Consider this *that* conversation. We talked to five dermatologists and plastic surgeons—Dr. Chang Son, board-certified dermatologist; Dr. Danny Guo, cosmetic dermatologist; Dr. Michael Tassavor of MDCS Dermatology; Dr. Marie Jhin, Chief Medical Officer and board-certified dermatologist;

and **Dr. Johnny Franco**, board-certified plastic surgeon and founder of Austin Plastic Surgeon—about what’s actually happening to skin during GLP-1-driven weight loss after 50 and what you can do about it starting today.

How Do GLP-1 Drugs Affect the Skin After 50?

Well, first, the medication itself isn’t directly aging your skin. Dr. Tassavor says that skin cells have receptors for GLP-1, and early research suggests these drugs may actually support skin repair. What people are really experiencing is a volume problem.

The face has fat pads that keep skin looking full and lifted. When those shrink quickly, the skin doesn’t shrink with them, which is where hollow cheeks, deeper folds, crepey texture and that persistent tired look come from.

The reason it hits harder after 50 comes down to what’s already there—or more accurately, what isn’t. “When GLP-1 causes volume loss in an older individual, their skin will not have the collagen and elastin reserves to respond like a 30 year old’s skin,” Dr. Guo tells *Parade*. “The skin is more likely to remain loose after weight loss and facial hollowing is more likely to persist.”

Dr. Jhin adds that menopause-related hormonal changes contribute to additional dryness and loss of elasticity on top of the weight-loss effects, making the combination particularly significant for women in this age group.



Getty

Some patients also notice dryness, irritation or hair shedding during major weight loss.

Dr. Jhin shares that it’s often a temporary response to physical stress or inadequate nutrition, not a permanent side effect. But it’s worth discussing with a provider rather than waiting it out alone.

Why Rapid Weight Loss Accelerates Collagen Loss and Skin Sagging in Women Over 50

Menopause alone costs roughly 2% of skin collagen per year, and up to 30% in the first five years after the last period. “Losing 40 pounds looks completely different at 35 than it does at 60,” says Dr. Tassavor. Estrogen keeps skin thick, hydrated and elastic, so when it drops, you’re starting the GLP-1 journey with much less cushion than you had a decade ago.

What’s more, Dr. Guo points out that reduced appetite on GLP-1 medications frequently leads to insufficient protein intake, which compromises the body’s ability to produce structural proteins like collagen.

If you’re eating less, your skin may not be getting what it needs to maintain itself—let alone rebuild. Dr. Jhin adds that GLP-1 medications don’t directly destroy collagen. What they do is remove the volume and support underneath the skin very quickly, revealing laxity that was already developing. The distinction matters because it means prevention and proactive support are far more powerful than trying to reverse damage after the fact.

The Active Skincare Ingredients Dermatologists Recommend While on a GLP-1

The goal is to both build collagen and protect the skin barrier. The ingredients with the best research behind them are retinoids, vitamin C, peptides, ceramides and hyaluronic acid—and the order in which you reach for them depends on your skin’s current state.

Retinoids are the consistent first recommendation for collagen stimulation. Dr. Tassavor suggests starting slow—maybe twice a week—because skin tends to become more easily irritated during weight loss.

Dr. Jhin adds that if the skin starts burning, stinging or peeling, scale back the frequency rather than layering on more products. Vitamin C in the morning supports collagen synthesis and provides antioxidant protection against the oxidative stress that accelerates collagen breakdown.

Daily SPF is an absolute non-negotiable for the same reason—UV exposure is one of the primary drivers of ongoing collagen loss.

For the dryness that GLP-1 medications genuinely do cause, ceramides and hyaluronic acid are the workhorses. Dr. Son specifically points to ceramides and peptides for optimal hydration, noting that certain peptides have also been shown to activate fibroblasts to stimulate collagen production.

For anyone looking for a starting-point product, Dr. Franco recommends Alastin Reform and Repair for its focus on supporting collagen and elastin without requiring a complicated routine.

“Skincare improves skin quality, but no cream replaces volume you’ve lost in your face.” Dr. Tassavor says. The topicals do meaningful work, but they’re not fillers.

Should You Completely Change Your Skincare Routine While Taking a GLP-1?

Nope! The goal is to build on what's working, not start over with a shelf of products branded specifically for GLP-1 patients.

Dr. Jhin says to keep the same basic structure—gentle cleanser, fragrance-free moisturizer, SPF every morning—and adapt it as changes appear.

If skin becomes drier or more sensitive during weight loss, reduce the frequency of strong actives and prioritize barrier repair temporarily.

If it's tolerating the routine well, stay the course and consider adding a richer moisturizer and a retinoid if you're not already using one. Dr. Guo points out that ideally this adjustment happens before starting GLP-1 treatment, since prevention is meaningfully easier than recovery.

The biggest mistake Dr. Tassavor sees is patients abandoning a good routine for whatever is currently being marketed as the GLP-1 skin solution. The fundamentals of collagen support and barrier repair don't change because a new category of drug exists.

When To See a Dermatologist About GLP-1 Skin Changes After 50

Earlier than you think, and ideally before the changes happen. "Don't wait until you've lost 40, 50 or 60 pounds and suddenly feel unhappy with your face or body," says Dr. Franco. The earlier a provider evaluates the skin, the more options exist.

Early collagen stimulation—Sofwave and conservative Sculptra are what he frequently uses in combination—can help prevent or improve changes rather than trying to correct them after they've fully set in.

There are also specific signs that warrant a prompt appointment rather than a wait-and-see approach. Dr. Tassavor lists four: any new rash or blistering (several skin reactions have been linked to GLP-1 medications), an injection site that's painful or spreading, heavy hair shedding that lasts several months and facial hollowing or sagging that's affecting how you feel about yourself.

"Don't wait and hope," he says. "We have real options." Those options—prescription skincare, microneedling, radiofrequency or laser tightening, collagen-stimulating injectables and fillers—are all more effective when they're not playing catch-up.

<https://parade.com/beauty/glp1-skin-effects-over-50>