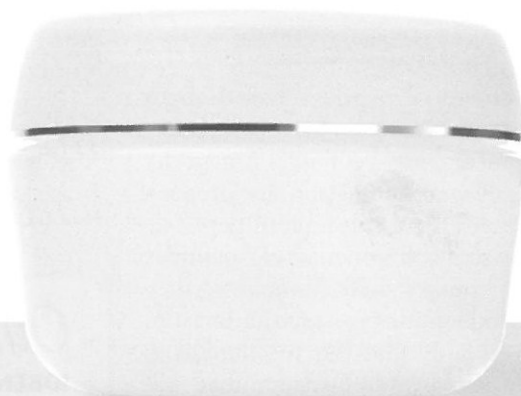


Understanding INGREDIENTS

What do the labels on your youth-restoring products mean?

By Candice Tehini



Vitamin A

Vitamin A used topically on the skin is called retinol and is found in many cosmetic brands. Vitamin A, or retinoids, forms part of one of the most-researched categories of ingredients for anti-ageing abilities. “Natural retinoids convert to retinol in the skin,” explains aesthetic specialist Dr Maureen Allem. Retin A is a stronger prescription version of retinol. The active form of a retinoid or vitamin A in the skin is retinoic acid.

Vitamin A is important for biological functions, cell differentiation and growth, and improves the quantity and quality of collagen and elastin in the skin. It increases epidermal thickness and speeds up the rate at which your cells divide – which improves your skin’s appearance.

Retinoids increase cell renewal, reducing the dead-skin build-up, which helps deter blackheads from forming. Retinoids may also reduce oil production and limit dark-spot production, since the melanocytes cannot make pigment fast enough to keep up with the rapid cell turnover. They are also believed to be effective for helping combat acne, enlarged pores and textural issues.

For people who are ageing, retinoids are vital in the war against wrinkles. “They have been proven in multiple studies on humans to prevent the breakdown of collagen, elastin and hyaluronic acid, which leads to wrinkles,” adds Allem. Retinoids help stimulate fibroblasts to make more collagen and hyaluronic acid. More collagen means more firmness and structure to the skin. More hyaluronic acid means more volume and moisture. Studies have shown that it helps rejuvenate the skin by reducing fine lines and wrinkles, rough patches and hyper-pigmentation.

Retinoic acid works quickly on signs of ageing, but the products can be irritating, leaving your skin red and peeling. These products should be introduced gradually every third day for the first two weeks, then every second day for the next two weeks if there is no sensitivity. If it continues to be well tolerated, then a pea-sized amount can be used nightly. The longer you use it, the better it works.