

Give Your Face a Drink

Or two, with quenching day and night moisturizers that deliver skin exactly what it's thirsty for. by Sewa Akili

Want healthy, supple, even-toned skin? Check out what's available in moisturizers. To whip up these facial cocktails, skin care companies use good skin science combined with a wide variety of the latest in beauty and botanicals. We've all heard the claims. But how much can a moisturizer really do? The answer might surprise you.

Why is moisturizing important? Our skin's outer layer, the epidermis, is a sheet made up of tiny little plates. The plates raise and separate when skin becomes too dry, giving it a rough feel and appearance. Moisturizers deliver water to our skin's outer layer, giving it a softer, fuller look. Dr. David J. Goldberg, Director of Laser Research at New York's Mt. Sinai Medical Center, explains, "When skin is moist, the plates in the epidermis are more aligned, and there are fewer crevices and valleys in the skin." That's why many of us find that our makeup goes on smoother after we moisturize. But moisturizers can do more than alleviate dryness. Goldberg, a specialist in skin cancer surgery, looks to the future when he advocates the regular use of moisturizers. "Moisturizers do help to maintain skin's water levels, but that's really a short-term benefit. These products also have very attractive long-term benefits." Collagen and elastin, the proteins responsible for skin's firmness and elasticity, are found in the under layer of the skin. "When the epidermis is damaged or dry," says Goldberg, "the dermis—the more delicate under layer of the skin—is vulnerable. Moisturizing gives you a physical barrier that protects the dermis from the ravages of wind, sun, and toxins in the air, keeping the skin supple." Then why not use products that contain collagen and elastin to ward off aging skin? Goldberg doesn't recommend it. Debunking a long-held beauty myth, he explains, "Collagen and elastin are both huge protein molecules that cannot penetrate the tiny cracks in the epidermis to get to the dermis where they need to be. Not to say that moisturizers containing collagen and elastin aren't effective," he continues, "but you are likely seeing the benefits of the water and emollients in the product."

With so many products offered at drug stores and cosmetic counters, it can be challenging to find the right moisturizer. Goldberg's advice to narrow the field? "Keep it simple. Don't combine too many ingredients or you open the door to irritation." The best way to follow that advice is to know what many popular skin care ingredients are and what they do.

Total Turnaround is a high performing exfoliator that instantly and continuously reveals newer, brighter skin.



Primacy Face Cream is a moisturizer and antioxidant treatment that protects skin against the damages of free radicals. Available only through dermatologists, plastic surgeons and licensed skincare professionals.



Absolue restores youthful appearance to skin through intense hydration and improves elasticity and clarity.



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Sunscreen: Beach bums aren't the only ones who should wear it. Even incidental sun exposure, the kind we get every day, degrades collagen and elastin and thins out the epidermis. Sunscreens with broad-spectrum coverage can prevent UV-induced damage such as premature wrinkles, crow's feet, and liver spots.

Absolue by Lancôme addresses the needs of the skin's appearance as affected by chronological aging, hormonal fluctuations and photo aging (sun exposure). With a menu of ingredients comprised of wild yam, seal algae and soy extract, Absolue combats dryness, loss of elasticity and radiance (\$90 for 1.7 oz., available at Lancôme counters in department and specialty stores nationwide).

Exfoliating Acids: Searching for a product to restore firmness to your skin? Try a moisturizer featuring alpha-hydroxy, beta-hydroxy, or salicylic acid, proven under a microscope to create new collagen. How? "These acids cause a slight wound below the skin, and the body responds by producing new collagen to heal the wound,"

L'Oréal Plénitude Age Perfect Re-Hydrating Night Cream works with skin's nightly recovery process to help restore health and vibrance to tired looking skin.

Silver Tip White Tea is a highly effective skin care element. It's antioxidant benefits are 100% more effective than Green Tea.



Goldberg explains, "That collagen is always younger and healthier than what was there before." Exfoliating acids also slough off dead cells, imparting skin with a clearer, brighter appearance. Clinique's Total Turnaround offers a more advanced approach to the facial exfoliation process by strengthening the underlying layers of skin by re-regulating and optimizing cell turnover (\$30 for 1.7 oz., available in fine department stores nationwide and at www.clinique.com).

Antioxidants: We may get all we need from a healthy diet and vitamin supplements, but there is reason to believe that antioxidants are beneficial when applied to the skin. Naturally present in the body, antioxidants neutralize the cell damage caused by free radicals, the harmful oxygen molecules linked to cancer and heart disease. Vitamin A is a collagen-builder, and like Vitamin E, it is important for wound healing. Vitamin C is essential for the formation of new collagen. Primacy Face Cream recharges skin with pure Vitamin E, Silymarin (derived from milk thistle), Soy Isoflavones (found in soybean extract) and Green Tea Extract. Available only through dermatologists, plastic surgeons and

licensed skincare professionals (\$128 for 1.67 oz.). Studies also suggest that other antioxidants, such as those found in teas and fruit seed extracts, promote healthier skin. A Perfect World White Tea Skin Guardian from Origins contains Silver Tip White Tea, a natural antioxidant three times more powerful than Green Tea. The oil-free elixir designed to be worn under moisturizer includes essences of mimosa, lemons and oranges (\$30 for 1 oz., available at department stores and at www.origins.com). White Tea Skin Guardian and a drinkable form of the tea are also available at Origins retail stores.

Soy: You've read that it relieves the symptoms of menopause and promotes a healthy heart, but did you also know that it can improve your skin's resilience? Soy supports collagen renewal and counteracts dry skin that naturally occurs with aging. Aveeno Skin Brightening Daily Moisturizer combines active soy extract and vitamins A and C to smooth, tone, and clarify your skin (\$11-\$14 for 1 oz., available at drug stores). For older skin, L'Oréal Plénitude Age Perfect creams in day and night formulas contain soy, mulberry extract and vitamin E to combat sagging skin and minimize the appearance of age spots (\$15 each, available at drug stores and department stores).

When you find the product right for you, use it regularly and you should see improvement. For best results, experts recommend washing and moisturizing your face twice a day. Children reaching puberty should moisturize, too. "Because of the long-term advantages of moisturizers," Goldberg says, "it's better to use a light one every day from an early age than to wait until you're 30 to use a heavy one." In other words, start early and you'll maximize your skin's appearance. And if you're not moisturizing at all, it's not too late. Today's moisturizers can actually slow and in some cases reverse the signs of aging, improve your skin's texture and tone, and give you back a youthful glow. So what are you waiting for? Belly up to the beauty bar and pour your face a tall one!