



BEAUTY



Hold the lines

Thanks to the wonder ingredient retinol, smooth and radiant skin is now easier to achieve at any age. Elisabeth King looks at the latest products.

I always love hearing from my friend Susie when she comes home from one of her many trips to Paris. Her nose never has anything to do with the Louvre, a fabulous restaurant or a hotel room with a view of the Eiffel Tower. Rather, Susie raves about a fabulous beauty product she's discovered. "I just had to buy this serum," she enthused after a recent visit. "It's the number-one anti-wrinkle product in France - it really works." For her, jetlag was a small price to pay for a line-free face.

But now, Susie no longer has to trek to the other side of the globe for her remarkable wrinkle-reducer. Roc Retin-Ox Intensive Anti-Wrinkle Serum Max (554) is at last available in Australia.

The not-so-secret ingredient behind the serum's ability to re-up the skin so visibly is retinol. A derivative of vitamin A (the vitamin responsible for cell metabolism), retinol is an ideal ingredient to treat fine lines, wrinkles and pigmentation, as well as improve overall skin texture and tone. According to Mintel Global New Products Database, nearly 300 cosmetics containing retinol have been released since 2003, including Ultracuticals Ultra A Facial Treatment Cream and Ultra A Treatment Serum (both \$46), plus Roc's amazing Retin-Ox range - Intensive Anti-Wrinkle Moisturiser Day (\$49), Night Cream (\$54) and the aforementioned Serum Max.

Why so many skin-care companies jumping on the retinol bandwagon? "Retinol is not only an excellent ingredient for counteracting photo-aging, it's very effective in restoring the health of individual cells in all skin types," says Dr Geoffrey Heber, founder of Australian skin-care brand Ultracuticals.

Marilyn Cassetta, aesthetic nurse specialist at Silkwood Medical in Sydney,

is also enthusiastic about the effects of retinol and its prescription-strength relative, tretinoin (sometimes known as retin A).

"Tretinoin offers the most bang for your beauty buck because of its ability to boost both collagen production and retention. However, as tretinoin can also initially irritate the skin, many people give up on it before the full benefits can be seen," she explains. "Retinol, on the other hand, is a more tolerable-strength compound, which is why you don't get those irritation problems with over-the-counter creams."

Dr John Voorhees, chairman of the dermatology department at the University of Michigan Medical School, started the retinol ball rolling in 1988 when he conducted the first double-blind study of tretinoin's effect on sun-damaged skin. In all 30 patients studied, skin texture improved, cell regeneration speeded up and pores were minimised. Since then, further studies have found that tretinoin and retinol even have the potential to prevent photo-aging altogether.

Armed with this knowledge, it's little wonder the Revitalift range is a top-seller for L'Oréal Paris, one of the world's leading anti-aging moisturiser brands. Revitalift Day Cream (\$28), Revitalift Double Lift (\$32) and Revitalift Night Cream (\$28) all contain its retinoid derivative, pro-retinol A, to stimulate cell renewal, smooth wrinkles and improve skin texture.

Clarins Renew Plus Night Lotion (\$88), which combines another derivative, retinol, with plant extracts, also promises to minimise minor imperfections and promote smoother skin. But if you need to get out the big guns, SkinCeuticals Retinol 0.5 (\$99) and Retinol 1.0 (\$116) are two of the most potent retinoid-based skin care products available.

If you prefer the more 'instant' results achieved by a laserless pumping session, try Shiseido Benefiance Pure Retinol Intensive Revitalizing Mask (\$80/pack of four). Infused with pure retinol, vitamins C and E, hesperidin (an antioxidant found in citrus fruits) and chlorella (an aquatic plant extract), the mask may make you look like the Phantom of the Opera during application, but the company claims it penetrates the skin more deeply than any cream or serum. Now that's something worth sipping about.

8 OF THE BEST



Ultracuticals Ultra A Treatment Serum, \$88; Ultracuticals Ultra A Facial Treatment Cream, \$88; Roc Retin-Ox Intensive Anti-Wrinkle Serum Max, \$54; L'Oréal Paris Revitalift Double Lift for Face and Neck, \$32; Clarins Renew Plus Night Lotion, \$88; SkinCeuticals Retinol 0.5 Hydrating Night Cream, \$99; L'Oréal Paris Revitalift Night Cream, \$28; Shiseido Benefiance Intensive Revitalizing Mask, \$80/pack of four.

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