

Beauty Ingredients Worth Understanding

IT SEEMS LIKE EVERY DAY, A BEAUTY BUZZWORD POPS UP (CAN YOU SAY “KAKADU PLUM”?). THAT’S WHERE THIS GLOSSARY COMES IN. READ ON FOR GAME-CHANGING INGREDIENTS THAT’LL MAKE SHOPPING AND HAVING GOOD SKIN EASIER.

By Lisa DeSantis



To Smooth Wrinkles...

BUZZY INGREDIENT: Retinoid appears as prescription-strength retinoic acid and over-the-counter retinol.

WHAT IT DOES: It acts as an exfoliant, helping to shed flakes and speed up skin cell turnover. It can also boost collagen production, helping to minimize the appearance of fine lines. Be careful, though: This stuff is strong and can cause irritation. Dermatologists suggest building up tolerance by applying it every other night (never more than a pea-size dollop) and layering it over and under moisturizer.

TRY: L’Oréal Paris Revitalift Derm Intensives 0.3% Pure Retinol Serum, \$37; at drugstores.

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To Brighten...

BUZZY INGREDIENT: An Australian superfood, Kakadu plum (try to say that out loud and not giggle) reportedly has the highest recorded level of natural vitamin C (100 times that of an orange).

WHAT IT DOES: It can help fight dullness and reduce brown spots in a gentler way than its lab-formulated counterparts, making it a no-brainer for sensitive or acne-prone skin.

TRY: Kora Organics Noni Glow Sleeping Mask, \$48; us.koraorganics.com.

BUZZY INGREDIENT: Vitamin C, which goes by upwards of 35 (!) monikers on labels, often called “ascorbic” something or other.

WHAT IT DOES: Technically, it neutralizes free radicals to limit damage from UV rays and environmental pollution. Oh, you mean in English? It diminishes discoloration and splotchiness.

TRY: Ole Henriksen Banana Bright Vitamin C Serum, \$65; sephora.com.

To Hydrate...

BUZZY INGREDIENT: Hyaluronic acid (HA for short) is a sugar found naturally in the skin, and when applied topically, it holds 1,000 times its weight in water.

WHAT IT DOES: It adds suppleness and delivers a dewy glow. While a little can work wonders, it's possible to overdo it: When applied in dry climates, it can pull moisture out of skin. Avoid this by using an HA serum and topping it with a moisturizer.

TRY: Neutrogena Hydro Boost Hyaluronic Acid Serum, \$24; at drugstores.

BUZZY INGREDIENT: Squalane is a saturated lipid that's produced when the naturally occurring antioxidant squalene is hydrogenated (yes, it's complicated).

WHAT IT DOES: This nongreasy emollient locks in moisture and prevents water loss without producing additional oil, so you get softer, smoother skin. If oils make you break out, this is for you.

TRY: Naturium Plant Squalane Face Oil, \$16; naturium.com.

BUZZY INGREDIENT: Watermelon, which is more than 90 percent water, is an all-star skin hydrator.

WHAT IT DOES: It gently exfoliates, hydrates, and brightens. Plus, it's more lightweight than creamier ingredients, so it's a great option for oily folks.

TRY: St. Ives Watermelon Glowing Oil-Free Face Moisturizer, \$6; target.com.



To Clear Acne...

BUZZY INGREDIENT: Salicylic acid is an oil-soluble beta hydroxy acid. It also plays the starring anti-inflammatory role in good ol' aspirin.

WHAT IT DOES: This guy deep-cleans pores and clears “visible congestion” (that's the polite way of saying blackheads and whiteheads).

TRY: Dr. Dennis Gross DRx Blemish Solutions Acne Eliminating Gel, \$40; sephora.com.



To Soothe...

BUZZY INGREDIENT: Honey is the queen bee of antibacterial and antifungal benefits.

WHAT IT DOES: The sweet stuff may help reduce the redness and swelling that result from acne, and it could even help fight acne-causing bacteria. It can be more effective if it's infused with propolis, a combo of beeswax and tree sap. It gets bonus points for soothing eczema.

TRY: Naturopathica Manuka Honey Hydrating Gel Mask, \$58; naturopathica.com.



To Improve Texture...

BUZZY INGREDIENT: Glycolic acid, made from sugarcane, shows up in toners and peel pads because of its liquidy texture.

WHAT IT DOES: If sugar is bad because it erodes your teeth, glycolic acid is good for a similar reason—it eats away at dead skin cells to reveal a brighter, smoother complexion. To reduce irritation, use it at night and apply sunscreen in the morning. For a more intense treatment, opt for a professional glycolic acid peel, which leaves skin looking radiant after a few days of redness and peeling.

TRY: Sobel Skin Rx 30% Glycolic Acid Peel, \$46; sephora.com.

To Even Discoloration...

BUZZY INGREDIENT: Niacinamide, which also goes by vitamin B₃.

WHAT IT DOES: It regulates sebum production (so long, excess grease) and decreases inflammation. It's key for brightening discoloration—which tends to be more prominent in those with darker skin tones—so reach for it if you have melasma (brown patches).

TRY: Paula's Choice Clinical Niacinamide 20% Treatment, \$48; paulaschoice.com.



To De-stress...

BUZZY INGREDIENT:

Ashwagandha is an herb that has been used in Ayurvedic medicine for thousands of years to fight fatigue and boost immunity (sign us up!).

WHAT IT DOES: Perhaps the question is what *doesn't* it do. When applied topically, it soothes reactive skin, fights free radicals, brightens, helps retain moisture, and has antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory effects.

TRY: Ranavat Imperial Glow Facial Polish, \$42; ranavat.com.

To Firm Up Lax Skin...

BUZZY INGREDIENT: Collagen is a protein that provides the scaffolding to keep skin plump, tight, and wrinkle-free. Scan labels for “hydrolyzed collagen,” which is easily absorbed.

WHAT IT DOES: It helps skin look and feel bouncier, but the molecule is typically too big to penetrate skin. A better option: microneedling, a DIY or pro treatment that pokes tiny holes in the skin to trigger healing and more collagen production.

TRY: BeautyBio GloPro Facial Microneedling Tool, \$199; beautybio.com.

BUZZY INGREDIENT: Peptides, short chains of amino acids, are the building blocks of proteins like collagen and elastin. They have names such as acetyl hexapeptide-3, palmitoyl tripeptide-1, and Peppa Pig (don't quote us on that last one).

WHAT THEY DO: Some types signal muscles to relax; others cue cells to create more collagen.

TRY: M-61 Hydraboost Collagen + Peptide Water Cream, \$74; bluemercury.com.

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