

Types of Retinoids

CHEAT SHEET



Editor's Note

I created this resource to help familiarize you with the types of vitamin A found in skincare products. Vitamin A is one of the most important nutrients for your skin, but the wrong one could be irritating—or ineffective! With this cheat sheet, you'll be able to identify vitamin A in ingredients lists and make an informed choice about which retinoid to use in your routine.

Michelle

PS: Stronger is NOT better. Over time, some over-the-counter retinoids can give you comparable results to prescription retinoic acid, with fewer side effects!

Types of Retinoids

Retinol Esters

As the weakest types of retinoids, retinol esters must undergo three conversion steps to become retinoic acid, the active form of vitamin A that can be used by your skin:

Retinol esters → Retinol → Retinaldehyde → Retinoic acid

Retinoid	Best For	Details	Products
Retinyl acetate	Sensitive skin and those new to retinoids	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A weak retinol ester with little evidence of skin benefits• Best used in combination with stronger retinoids	<u>A313 Vitamin A Pommade</u>
Retinyl linoleate	Sensitive skin and those new to retinoids	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A weak retinol ester with little evidence of skin benefits• Best used in combination with stronger retinoids	

Types of Retinoids

Retinol Esters — Continued

Retinoid	Best For	Details	Products
Retinyl palmitate	Sensitive skin and those new to retinoids	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A weak retinol ester• In higher concentrations, may help reduce wrinkles and increase skin thickness	<u>A313 Vitamin A Pommade</u> <u>Shani Darden Texture Reform</u>
Retinyl propionate	First signs of skin aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The most effective retinol ester• In higher concentrations, may help reduce wrinkles and pigmentation	<u>A313 Vitamin A Pommade</u> <u>Shani Darden Retinol Reform</u>

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Retinol

Retinol must undergo two conversion steps to become retinoic acid, the active form of vitamin A that can be used by your skin:

Retinol → Retinaldehyde → Retinoic acid

Retinoid	Best For	Details	Products
Retinol	All skin except sensitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vitamin A, the most proven over-the-counter anti-aging ingredient• Helps reduce wrinkles, acne, sagging and pigmentation• Can be irritating for some people, but it is possible to build up a tolerance over time	<p><u>Lixirskin Night Switch Retinol 1%</u></p> <p><u>The Ordinary Retinol 0.2%, 0.5% and 1% in Squalane</u></p> <p><u>The Inkey List Retinol</u></p>

Types of Retinoids

Retinaldehyde

Retinaldehyde is converted to retinoic acid, the active form of vitamin A that can be used by your skin, in just one step:

Retinaldehyde → Retinoic acid

Retinoid	Best For	Details	Products
Retinaldehyde	All skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The direct precursor to retinoic acid• Works faster than retinol, with less irritation, and may be more effective• Helps reduce wrinkles, acne, sagging and pigmentation	<u>Arcona Advanced "A" Serum</u>

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Retinoic Acid Esters

Retinoic acid esters are a new generation of retinoids. Retinyl retinoate is converted into retinoic acid, the active form of vitamin A that can be used by your skin, in one step. Hydroxypinacolone retinoate does not require conversion at all and binds directly to retinoid receptors.

Retinoic acid esters → Retinoic acid

Retinoid	Best For	Details	Products
Retinyl retinoate	All skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An ester of retinol and retinoic acid• Less irritating than retinol, and may be more effective• Helps reduce wrinkles and acne	<u>Verso Super Facial Serum</u>
Hydroxypinacolone retinoate	All skin, especially sensitive skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A retinoic acid ester• Produces little to no irritation• Less proven than retinol, but may help reduce wrinkles and acne	<u>The Ordinary Granactive Retinoid 2% and 5% in Squalane</u> <u>CyberDerm Retin+Erase</u> <u>Mad Hippie Vitamin A Serum</u>

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Retinoic Acid

Retinoic acid is the active form of vitamin A. In most countries, it is available by prescription only (with the exception of Differin in the US).

Retinoid	Best For	Details	Products
Adapalene	Mild to moderate acne	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A third generation retinoid that treats and prevents acne• More stable and less irritating than tretinoin	<u>Differin</u>
Tretinoin	Signs of aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The most widely prescribed retinoid• Helps reduce wrinkles, sagging and sun damage• Can be drying and irritating	Retin-A <u>Retin-A Micro</u> Renova

Types of Retinoids

Retinoic Acid — Continued

Retinoid	Best For	Details	Products
Tazarotene	Psoriasis, acne and sun damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The strongest topical retinoid• Reduces inflammation and normalizes cell growth• Can be drying and irritating	Tazorac
Isotretinoin	Severe acne	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The strongest oral retinoid• Associated with many adverse side effects• Also available in a weaker topical form in combination with erythromycin (an antibiotic)	Roaccutane