

BEAUTY

glow getter

Vitamin C is the not-so-secret star skin-care ingredient that you need in your routine
By Jill Dunn

Vitamin C is the little black dress of skin care. It never goes out of style, works on every complexion and multitasks to keep you looking younger for longer (so long, dark spots and crow's feet!). It's long been proven to prevent oxidative damage from the environment, brighten your skin and boost collagen production – plus, Hollywood stars rely on its beauty benefits for hyper-glowy skin (it's a go-to for facialists before red-carpet events). “The reality is that vitamin C has withstood the test of time because it works,” says Gloria Lu, a cosmetic chemist and co-founder of the skin-care blog *Chemist Confessions*. “There’s nothing ‘new’ about it per se, but it’s making a comeback because more people are starting to seek out what really works, and it happens to

provide multiple benefits.” Since the powerhouse ingredient is an antioxidant, it acts as a shield to fight premature aging caused by the sun’s UV rays, as well as environmental pollution. “Our body’s natural vitamin C decreases as we age so adding it topically can boost our natural reservoirs and be very beneficial to help protect against damage from UV and other environmental pollutants,” says Dr. Allison Sutton, a Vancouver-based dermatologist. “Vitamin C also plays a role in the process of collagen synthesis – collagen is essential to keeping our skin nice and plump. Not only that, but it can help lighten discoloration.

GET C-SAVVY

With so many vitamin C offerings at the counter, how do you go about selecting your

citrus boost of choice? It’s important to remember that there are various types of vitamin C derivatives: you’ll see ingredients like “ascorbyl palmitate” and “tetrahexyldecyl ascorbate” on many labels. The most widely tested and trusted is L-ascorbic acid, though Dr. Sutton cautions: “While it has many wonderful properties, it is a molecule that is very difficult to formulate. It is highly sensitive to air, temperature and pH, as well as the presence of light and water.”

What this means is you’ll want to scan the label for at least a five-per-cent concentration – “preferably 10 per cent and above to get the most out of its benefits,” suggests Victoria Fu, also a cosmetic chemist, who co-founded the *Chemist Confessions* skin-care blog.

According to Dr. Sutton, as soon as you open a vitamin C product, it starts losing its potency and

winning formulas

Suspended in an oil with a moisturizing boost from the barrier-protecting, moisturizing molecule squalane, this vitamin C softens crow’s feet in a flash.
Biossance Squalane + Vitamin C Rose Oil, \$90, sephora.ca

Designed to be used every day for 10 consecutive days, think of it as a brightening boot camp in a bottle.
Vichy Liftactiv Vitamin C With Hyaluronic Acid, \$45, shoppersdrugmart.ca

Simply tear open the packet and mix the powder into a paste with a teaspoon of water for an instant antidote to dullness.
Fresh Vitamin Nectar Glow Powder 30 Second Foaming Facial, \$49 for 12 packets, sephora.ca

With a tag team of lactic acid and vitamin C, and a silky texture, skin is left feeling smooth and mega-bright.
Dermalogica Biolumin-C Serum, \$118, dermalogica.ca

Spiked with 10% exfoliating fruit acids and 5% vitamin C, use this once a week for a major perk-me-up.
Rodial Vit C Brightening Mask, \$110, at Murale

Packed with three different sources of vitamin C, dark spots don’t stand a chance. Plus, the weightless creme’s peach tint adds subtle colour correction for even more glow.
Ole Henriksen C-Rush Brightening Gel Crème, \$52, sephora.ca

One scoop in your water-based daily moisturizer will even out texture and tone. The powder formula ensures stability to help you get maximum benefits delivered directly into the skin.
The Ordinary 100% L-Ascorbic Acid Powder, \$5.80, theordinary.com

thus should be used within a few months (wherever possible, try to find a version that’s contained in a dark glass bottle or an airtight container). “There’s also no point in continuing to use an old, oxidized L-ascorbic acid serum,” says Victoria. “There’s no need to be alarmed when you spot a bit of colour change, but when it gets to the amber range, it’s probably time to move on.”

FIND YOUR ROUTINE

For best results, use a vitamin C serum or moisturizer in the morning alongside your SPF to help prevent against daily environmental aggressors. It doesn’t always play nicely with other active ingredients – though certain ingredients can boost its powers – so choose its sidekicks wisely.

“You’ll often see antioxidants like vitamin E or ferulic acid paired with L-ascorbic acid in serums. These help to protect vitamin C, prolong its shelf life and boost its efficacy,” says Gloria. “Retinol works best at a different pH than vitamin C [so] space them out with vitamin C during the day and retinol at night.”

Remember: you’re never too young or too old to start using it. “It is always best to start as early as you can – early to mid-20’s for maximum prevention – but all age groups would see some benefit from using vitamin C products,” says Dr. Sutton. 