

**Alpha hydroxy acids** (AHAs) are naturally occurring acids that help loosen up dead surface cells and speed up the skin's natural exfoliation process. AHAs are found in dairy products (lactic acid), sugar (glycolic acid), and citrus fruits (citric acid). Applied topically, AHAs help diminish the look of fine lines and unclog pores.

**Antioxidants** protect skin from damaging free radicals (also known as oxidants). Free radicals are unstable molecules caused by pollution, smoke, ultraviolet light, and other environmental factors. These unstable molecules attack the skin, causing visible signs of aging like fine lines and wrinkles. Some antioxidants include vitamin C (helps reduce appearance of hyperpigmentation), vitamin E (found in many moisturizers because it makes skin softer and smoother), and green tea (found in many antiaging products).

**Ceramides** prevent water loss and help encourage skin-cell renewal. They help as a first line of defense for dry, chapped, cracked skin and are found in many over-the-counter moisturizers.

**Collagen**, a protein found naturally in the skin, is thought to be an effective water-binding ingredient when it's applied topically. Experts differ in opinion on whether creams formulated with collagen can also help boost the skin's ability to produce collagen.

**Copper** is thought by some experts to help encourage the production of collagen and elastin, two supporting structures in the skin. It's also said to speed up wound healing, but the jury is still out on its effectiveness.

**Glycolics** are part of the alpha hydroxy acid family. They help speed up the process through which skin sloughs off its outermost layer of dead cells to reveal a layer of new, smooth skin cells.

**Growth factors** control cell growth in different parts of the body and are used in antiaging creams to help build collagen and soften fine lines and wrinkles. TNS Recovery Complex, a type of growth factor, is a good choice if you have sensitive skin and can't use retinoids or alpha hydroxy acids.

**Hyaluronic acid**, a sugar molecule, is an ingredient in many moisturizers because it helps skin retain moisture and gives the skin a smoother look.

**Hydroquinone** is an antioxidant that helps suppress the enzymes in the skin that are responsible for producing pigment. Skincare products containing hydroquinone are recommended by some dermatologists to lighten age spots and dark spots.

**Retinoids** are vitamin-A derivatives that stimulate collagen production and help renew the skin. Retinoids are also prescribed for the treatment of acne because they help unclog clogged pores. Topical creams like Retin-A Micro and Renova (both available by prescription only) contain retinoids.

**Soy isoflavones** are thought by some experts to block the pathway of melanin, which might make it helpful in treating dark spots. A type of plant hormone, soy isoflavones also have an effect on skin similar to estrogen and may help prevent collagen loss in postmenopausal women.

**Rx SMARTS: MEDICINES  
COMMONLY PRESCRIBED BY  
DERMATOLOGISTS**

SYMPTOM	R <sub>x</sub>
Flaking scalp (dandruff)	<i>OLUX Foam</i>
Dry, excessively chapped lips	<i>Cutivate Ointment</i>
Dry, cracked skin on body (especially feet)	<i>Salex Cream</i>
Acne	<i>Differin Cream</i>
Dark spots and stubborn blemishes	<i>Tri-Luma Cream</i>
Fine lines and wrinkles	<i>Renova</i>