

Beauty > Best Skincare Products For 2022

THE 7 BEST AZELAIC ACID PRODUCTS THAT DERMATOLOGISTS SWEAR WILL TRANSFORM YOUR SKIN

Azelaic acid erases skin imperfections, like acne and hyperpigmentation.

BY [NICOLE SAUNDERS](#) NOV 28, 2022



Best Products; Courtesy TULA, The Ordinary

As [Best Products' beauty editor](#), I constantly ask dermatologists about the [best skincare products](#) and [ingredients](#) — and there's one under-the-radar skincare ingredient derms can't stop talking about: azelaic acid. It's most known for targeting hyperpigmentation issues caused by [acne](#) and melasma, but our experts say azelaic acid has a ton of other key benefits, too.

Ever curious about this emerging ingredient, I connected with a few of our most-trusted dermatologists about all things azelaic acid. The pros discuss how to shop for azelaic acid and their no-fail azelaic acid skincare products. The best part? Our best overall recommendation is [The Ordinary Azelaic Acid 10% Suspension Brightening Cream](#), which costs just \$10 at Sephora. And don't worry: The rest of these azelaic acid products are \$48 or less. Clean, smooth skin on a budget? BRB, if you need me, I'm adding them *all* to my [Amazon](#) and [Sephora](#) shopping carts RN.

Best Azelaic Acid Products

1

BEST OVERALL

Azelaic Acid 10% Suspension Brightening Cream

The Ordinary

\$10 AT SEPHORA

[Read More](#)

LIGHTWEIGHT FORMULA

- 2

BOOST 10% Azelaic Acid Booster Cream Gel

Paula's Choice

\$33 AT AMAZON

\$33 AT AMAZON

[Read More](#)
- 3

TREATS AND PREVENTS ACNE

Clear It Up Acne Clearing + Tone Correcting Gel

TULA

\$27 AT AMAZON

\$27 AT AMAZON

[Read More](#)
- 4

EXFOLIATING TONER

Enhance Brightening Solution

Glytone

\$39 AT AMAZON

\$39 AT AMAZON

[Read More](#)
- 5

CREATED BY A DERMATOLOGIST

Ain't Misbehavin' Medicated Acne Control Serum

DERMAdoctor

\$48 AT DERMSTORE

\$48 AT DERMSTORE

[Read More](#)
- LOAD MORE +

What Is Azelaic Acid?

According to board-certified dermatologist Dr. Michelle Henry, M.D., founder of [Skin & Aesthetic Surgery of Manhattan](#), azelaic acid works by inhibiting the melanin-producing enzyme called tyrosinase, which causes hyperpigmentation. Henry explains, "By blocking this enzyme, azelaic acid inhibits epidermal melanogenesis and prevents the excess build-up of pigment cells on the skin".

Azelaic Acid Benefits

Beyond treating and preventing hyperpigmentation and melasma, azelaic acid offers several other skin benefits. I asked Henry and fellow board-certified dermatologist Dr. Anar Mikailov, M.D., FAAD, founder of [Skintensive](#), to break down the many benefits of azelaic acid.

- ▶ **Azelaic acid is super gentle and safe during pregnancy and while lactating**, making it ideal for those experiencing melasma and acne while pregnant and new moms.
- ▶ **Azelaic acid promotes skin exfoliation**, so you'll have a nice and smooth complexion. Plus, it doesn't increase sun sensitivity. However, you'll still need to slather on [sunscreen](#) to avoid the solar rays from undoing all the good benefits an azelaic acid skincare product provides.
- ▶ **Azelaic acid is compatible with all skin tones and types**, including [darker skin tones](#) and sensitive skin. Azelaic acid is especially incredible for oily and combination skin because it is antibacterial with keratolytic properties, targeting acne and rough skin patches.

- ▶ **Given its anti-inflammatory properties**, azelaic acid also helps calm [rosacea](#) by soothing redness and minimizing swelling.
- ▶ **Azelaic acid can even treat [perioral dermatitis](#)**, which occurs when small, inflammatory papules and pustules pop up around the mouth.

How to Shop

INGREDIENT CONCENTRATION

Henry and Mikailov say it's essential to note the amount of azelaic acid in each product when you're shopping. As dermatologists, they're keen on prescription-strength concentrations (20% or higher) because they typically work within a month or two. But, they say you can easily find over-the-counter products that contain the maximum 10% concentration of azelaic acid, and still experience visible results within 3-4 months.

While that may sound like a long time, it's worth being patient for — I promise! Hear me out: It takes about the same time to see results from using salicylic acid and benzoyl peroxide skincare products to tackle acne. Plus, using just one of these azelaic acid products is *way* cheaper than [chemical peels](#) and undoubtedly not painful as expensive laser treatments.

OTHER ACTIVE INGREDIENTS

Great news: Azelaic acid is compatible with several ingredients, including [vitamin C](#), [niacinamide](#) found in [TULA Clear It Up Acne Clearing + Tone Correcting Gel](#), alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs), and beta hydroxy acids (BHAs) found in [Paula's Choice BOOST 10% Azelaic Acid Booster Cream Gel](#). Mikailov says it can be paired with more irritating ingredients, like [retinol](#), once daily or every other day.

Azelaic acid sounds pretty amazing, right?! To help you clear up your complexion before the holiday season kicks off, be sure to utilize one of these expert-loved azelaic acid products. Each of their suggestions are well-loved by online reviewers across reader-favorite sites.

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1

BEST OVERALL

The Ordinary

Azelaic Acid 10% Suspension Brightening Cream

\$10 AT SEPHORA

\$19 AT WALMART

\$10 AT SKINSTORE

Pros

- ✓ Affordable
- ✓ Compatible with all skin types
- ✓ Most expert recommendations

Cons

- ✗ Some reviewers experience noticeable pilling

Our best overall recommendation happens to be the most affordable, but it doesn't skimp on quality. Its impressive formula combines azelaic acid with dimethicone, a [non-comedogenic](#) and hydrating ingredient. Plus, it earned snaps from several experts and boasts thousands of enthusiastic 5-star reviews.

Henry and board-certified dermatologist [Dr. Diane Madfes](#), M.D. FAAD, are both fans of this over-the-counter azelaic acid skincare product. “The azelaic acid is in a hydrating vitamin E base that is good for calming

inflamed skin,” says Madfes, who is an assistant professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

[Dr. Tiffany Libby](#), M.D., FAAD, notes the lightweight gel-cream formulation also helps brighten a dull complexion while targeting rosacea, acne, and discoloration.

This illuminating cream is also a favorite of [Dr. Jodi LoGerfo](#), DNP, thanks to its versatility for being incredibly beneficial for all skin types. Yes, even for those with the most sensitive skin. LoGerfo appreciates that it's free of pesky ingredients, such as parabens, formaldehydes, phthalates, oxybenzone, and sulfates, like SLS and SLES.

More: [These Pore Vacuums Remove Your Blackheads Without the Irritation](#)

Key Specs

Rating	4.1-star average from 887 Sephora reviews
Size	1 fl. oz.

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2

LIGHTWEIGHT FORMULA

Paula's Choice

BOOST 10% Azelaic Acid Booster Cream Gel



Now 15% off

\$33 AT AMAZON

\$31 AT
PAULASCHOICE.COM

\$39 AT NORDSTROM

Pros

- ✓ Calms redness and unclogs pores
- ✓ Smoothes uneven skin texture

Cons

- ✗ Some reviewers with dry skin say it's not hydrating enough

This impressive azelaic acid cream is also popular among our skincare experts — a casual four experts, including board-certified dermatologists [Dr. Audrey Kunin](#), M.D., and [Dr. Brendan Camp](#), M.D., FAAD, of MDCS Dermatology, consider it one of the best options money can buy.

Camp says, “Paula’s Choice 10% Azelaic Acid Booster is a serum, meaning that it is thin and water-like in consistency. When layered under a moisturizer, or even added to one, it helps address discoloration related to acne and skin irritation.”

Jennifer Weiss, the dermatological PA at [Marmur Medical](#), also loves this lightweight and non-comedogenic cream gel. "The azelaic acid in the product fades hyperpigmentation to achieve a brighter, smoother complexion. It also contains salicylic acid, which helps fight stubborn acne breakouts," she says.

LoGerfo adds that it’s effective at treating blotchy red skin, and it’s her favorite choice for patients with rosacea. “It has licorice root extract, which can be soothing to even the most sensitive skin and can help lighten marks on the skin and tame redness,” she says.

Key Specs

Rating	4.4-star average from 3,677 Amazon reviews
Size	1 fl. oz.

3

TREATS AND PREVENTS ACNE

TULA

Clear It Up Acne Clearing + Tone Correcting Gel



Now 30% off

\$27 AT AMAZON

\$62 AT WALMART

\$36 AT QVC

Pros

- ✓ Clean ingredients
- ✓ Cruelty-free

Cons

- ✗ Some reviewers say it's relatively sticky

While anyone with acne can use *any* of these azelaic acid products, we think this oil-free option is incredibly wonderful for acne-prone skin. For starters, you can help fade post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation caused by acne with help from one of Camp's favorite azelaic acid products. He's most impressed that TULA's Correcting Gel combines azelaic acid with skin-calming and acne-fighting ingredients.

In addition, Camp is impressed that it contains [niacinamide](#), a form of vitamin B-3 known for its ability to calm red, irritated skin, while [salicylic acid](#) is a beta hydroxy acid that penetrates deep into pores to flush them of oil and debris. It also relies on a blend of other hydrating ingredients to help balance out the 10% concentration of azelaic acid.

Notably, [hyaluronic acid](#) and willowherb are used to hydrate and soothe skin, wild mint and mushroom to [minimize the look of large pores](#), and prebiotics to maintain skin balance.

Key Specs

Rating	4.7-star average from 352 Amazon reviews
Size	1 fl. oz.

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4

EXFOLIATING TONER

Glytone

Enhance Brightening Solution



\$39 AT AMAZON

\$39 AT DERMSTORE

\$29 AT SKINSTORE

Pros

- ✓ Restores pH balance
- ✓ Improves discoloration and brightens dull skin

Cons

- ✗ Some reviewers find the container messy

Rough, dull skin can be a drag — and luckily for you, Glytone's facial toner is an excellent product that earned snaps from Libby, the director of Mohs micrographic and dermatologic surgery at Brown.

She says, "I love recommending this exfoliating toner, which is easily applied to the skin with a [soft cotton round](#). It contains [glycolic acid](#), azelaic acid, and niacinamide to brighten skin, lighten dark spots, and exfoliate away surface-level dead skin cells to improve skin texture and tone."

Plus, freshly exfoliated skin allows for better penetration and efficacy of other ingredients, like malachite extract, a bright green mineral that promises to provide antioxidant protection against free radicals and oxidative stress.

Key Specs

Rating	4.5-star average from 153 Amazon reviews
Size	6.7 fl. oz.

5

CREATED BY A DERMATOLOGIST

DERMAdoctor

Ain’t Misbehavin’ Medicated Acne Control Serum

\$48 AT DERMSTORE

\$50 AT WALMART

\$36 AT SKINSTORE

Pros

- ✓ Reviewers say it works relatively fast
- ✓ Mattifies oily skin

Cons

- ✗ Smells like tea tree oil (which some reviewers don't care for)

Kunin created DERMAdoctor, so naturally, she's a fan of her creation, but we're impressed with its effective ingredient list and standout online reviews. Notably, it pairs salicylic acid with azelaic acid, tea tree oil, and botanicals for effective blemish control.

And if you've ever dealt with hormonal or cystic acne, then you understand it's challenging to treat. Thankfully, Amazon reviewers say this azelaic acid skincare product does wonders for acne.

One Amazon reviewer gave this a 5-star review because it eliminated cystic acne and bumps under the skin within a week. Others say their skin purges, but the long-term, acne-free results are worth the initial onset of blemishes.

A bonus: This lightweight serum is non-comedogenic, allergy-tested, and non-irritating to sensitive skin types, which is always appreciated.

Key Specs

Rating	4.3-star average from 66 Amazon reviews
Size	1 fl. oz.

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6

REBALANCES SKIN

Bliss

Green Tea Wonder Clarifying Overnight Gel Mask

\$15 AT WALMART

Pros

- ✓ Most ideal for normal, oily, and combination skin types
- ✓ Visibly tightens the look of large pores

Cons

- ✗ Some reviewers don't like the refined glitter in the mask

Camp’s third and final azelaic acid recommendation comes from Bliss. “It capitalizes on the antioxidants in green tea and azelaic acid to detoxify skin. It is a lightweight, smooth gel that leaves skin brighter and pores clearer,” he says.

This azelaic acid skincare product also relies on [aloe vera](#) juice to hydrate your skin without leaving it greasy and rosa canica extract to minimize the look of large pores.

It's also the sole overnight azelaic acid face mask on our list, so it has a slighter thicker consistency than the other formulations we recommend. However, there's no real functional difference. They all stay on your skin until you cleanse in the morning or night, meaning azelaic acid has plenty of time to soak into your skin.

Key Specs

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Rating	4.2-star average from 148 Walmart reviews
Size	1.7 fl. oz.

7

TRIFECTA OF ACTIVE INGREDIENTS

Facile Skincare

Brighten Pigment Serum

\$38 AT REVOLVE

Pros

- ✓ Suitable for all skin types
- ✓ Helps repair your skin barrier

Cons

- ✗ Could be too potent for skin that doesn't have melasma

Rounding out our list is Mikailov's favorite over-the-counter azelaic acid skincare product. He says the very lightweight and fast-absorbing serum can be used during the day. Mikailov also appreciates the gentle and non-irritating formula containing other skin-brightening ingredients, like tranexamic acid and niacinamide.

While we stand behind *every* pick in this guide, we think this one is most effective on melasma. [Studies show](#) that tranexamic acid is a safe and effective treatment against melasma, and when paired with azelaic acid, we have no doubt it'll help even out your skin tone.

This relatively new brand has earned a modest amount of online reviews, but each one is incredibly enthusiastic. For example, one reviewer called this a must-have because it illuminates their complexion. “After I wash my face, I put this bad boy on, and WOW, my skin looks so healthy and bright — what else could you ask for!? I absolutely love it, and the tiny bit of gold pearl that it has makes my skin look extra radiant and perfect,” says their 5-star review.

Key Specs

Rating	5-star average from 4 reviews on Facile Skincare
Size	1 fl. oz.

[NICOLE SAUNDERS](#) Beauty Editor
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