

BEAUTY > SKINCARE

The 11 Best Moisturizers for Sensitive Skin in 2022

Drunk Elephant Protini Polypeptide Moisturizer strengthens the skin barrier and offers a plush layer of hydration.

By **Olivia Cefalu** | Updated on November 22, 2022 @ 06:11PM



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ULTA

It's a tale as old as time for anyone with sensitive skin: One of your favorite

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fine until the next morning when you discover you have a full-blown breakout.

For sensitive skin, finding staple products for your routine that are effective, fun to use, and non-irritating can feel like an impossible feat — especially since sensitivity manifests itself in a few different ways and can be caused by a variety of things. That’s why we consulted with leading dermatologists to find the best moisturizers for sensitive skin that will keep your complexion smooth, soft, and (most importantly) comfortable. [Drunk Elephant Protini Polypeptide Moisturizer](#) proved to be our top option thanks to its sensitive skin-friendly formula that features nine peptides to strengthen the skin barrier — but we also found 10 others that are just as

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BEST OVERALL:
[Drunk Elephant Protini Polypeptide Cream at Amazon](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

BEST OIL-FREE MOISTURIZER:
[Neutrogena Oil-Free Moisture at Amazon](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

BEST DAYTIME MOISTURIZER:
[REN Clean Skincare Day Cream at Amazon](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

BEST DRUGSTORE:
[CeraVe Moisturizing Cream at Amazon](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

BEST REPARATIVE:
[Kiehl's Centella Sensitive Cica Cream at Sephora](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

BEST FOR NIGHT:
[EltaMD Intense Moisturizer at Amazon](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

BEST FRAGRANCE-FREE:
[First Aid Beauty Ultra Repair Face Moisturizer at Ulta](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

BEST FOR HYPERPIGMENTATION:
[Obagi Medical Obagi Hydrate Facial Moisturizer at Amazon](#)

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[Belif The True Cream Aqua Bomb at Amazon](#)

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Best Overall: Drunk Elephant Protini Polypeptide Cream

★★★★☆ 4.3

 Drunk Elephant Protini Polypeptide Cream

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PHOTO: SEPHORA

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[View On Sephora](#)

[View On Ulta](#)

What We Love: On top of moisturizing, it strengthens the skin barrier with nine different peptides.

What We Don’t Love: We wish you could buy refills for this product.

While retinol is commonly touted as the holy grail of anti-aging ingredients, it can be too harsh for reactive skin and those with conditions such as eczema and psoriasis. That's where peptides, the hero ingredient of this rich Drunk Elephant moisturizer, enter the picture. Peptides are the building blocks of proteins — including collagen and keratin — which help keep skin firm and smooth. Plant-derived antioxidants (including water lily stem cell extract and soybean folic acid) round out the formula to improve overall skin texture and tone.

With a slew of gentle yet effective ingredients, this moisturizer is as caring

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nothing I would change about the formula, but I would love this moisturizer even more if refills were available for purchase, rather than having to buy all new packaging when I inevitably use up the last drop.

Price at time of publish: \$68

Skin Type: Sensitive, combo, and dry | **Size:** 1.69 oz. | **Active Ingredients:** Peptides, Waterlily stem cell extract, Soybean folic acid, and Glycerin

Best Oil-Free Moisturizer: Neutrogena Oil-Free Moisturizer for Sensitive Skin

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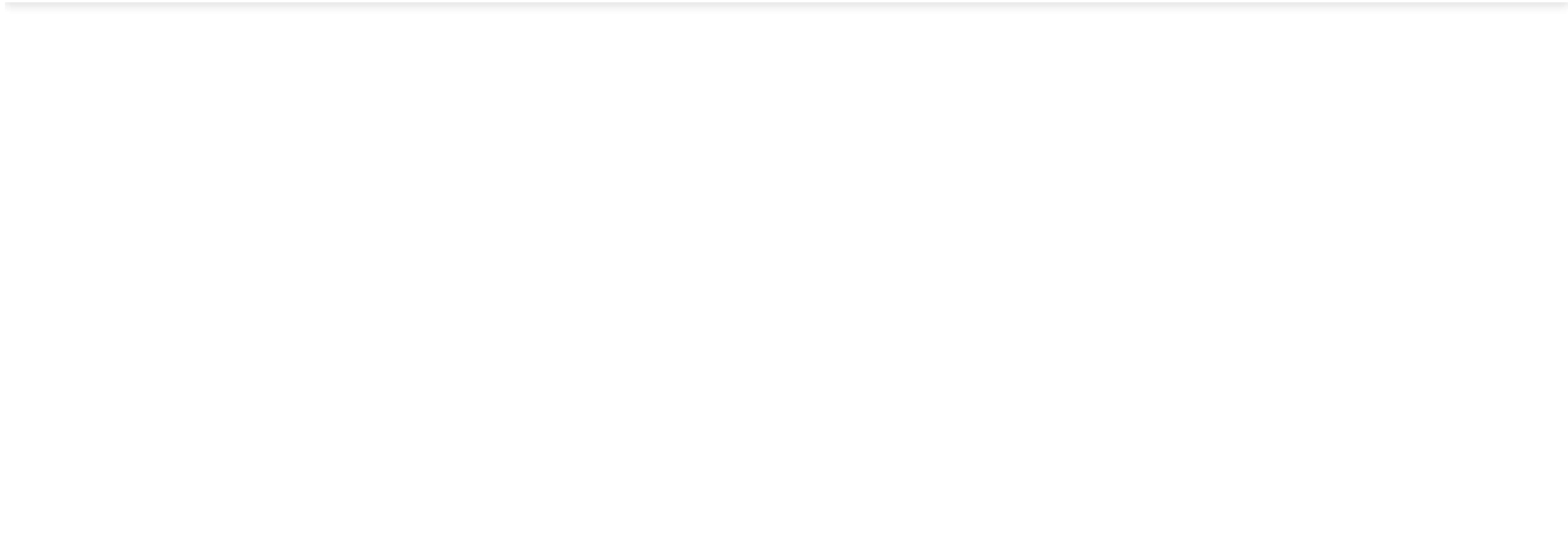


PHOTO: AMAZON

[View On Amazon](#) \$11

[View On Walmart](#)

[View On Walgreens](#)

What We Love: The oil-free formula is ideal for those who have acne-prone or oily skin.

What We Don’t Love: If you have dry skin or experience eczema, this moisturizer doesn’t provide quite enough hydration.

More likely than not, you’ve probably seen this cream in your mother or grandmother’s medicine cabinet — since Neutrogena introduced the formula in 1983, it has been a mainstay for just about every skin type. The wildly affordable, gentle moisturizer is especially safe for reactive skin, and anyone who prefers a lightweight lotion over a heavy cream. With zero

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Price at time of publish: \$12

Skin Type: Oily and acne-prone | **Size:** 4 fl oz. | **Active Ingredients:** Glycerin

Best Daytime Moisturizer: REN Clean Skincare Evercalm Global Protection Day Cream

 REN Clean Skincare Evercalm Global Protection Day Cream

PHOTO: SEPHORA

[View On Amazon](#) \$50

[View On Sephora](#)

[View On Dermstore](#)

What We Love: This moisturizer helps neutralize redness.

What We Don’t Love: It contains sesame oil which is a common allergen.

Finding an adequate daytime moisturizer for sensitive skin can feel like a daunting task — you want something that feels weightless throughout the day, but still imparts intense hydration to keep skin comfortable. That’s where REN Clean Skincare Evercalm Global Protection Day Cream comes in: This moisturizer feels like a splash of cool water on stressed-out, redness-prone skin thanks to lingonberry seed oil, which is rich in omega fatty acids to support the skin barrier, and licorice and seaweed extracts, which help calm irritation. Just a few dabs of the soothing formula can keep skin hydrated and supple, while simultaneously acting as an invisible shield to ward off pollution and other external aggressors. Plus, the brand is dedicated to making the planet a better place, so you can feel good

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Price at time of publish: \$50

Skin Type: Dry and redness-prone | **Size:** 1.7 oz. | **Active Ingredients:** Lingonberry seed oil, Licorice extract, Seaweed extract, and Shea butter

Best Drugstore: CeraVe Moisturizing Cream

★★★★★ 4.8

cerave-moisturizing-cream

PHOTO: AMAZON

[View On Amazon](#) \$18

[View On Target](#)

[View On Walmart](#)

What We Love: It’s a classic and can always be trusted to replenish hydration levels.

What We Don’t Love: The texture is extremely thick.

Don't want to spend a ton of money on a moisturizer? Look no further than CeraVe's tried-and-true moisturizing cream. Formulated with [hydrating hyaluronic acid](#) and [skin barrier-strengthening](#) ceramides, it instantly seals in moisture, which is key for preventing irritating flare-ups. The best part? It can be used on the face *and* body, essentially making it a one stop shop for fixing all of your dry skin blues. This is also an ideal pick [if you experience eczema](#), as it has the National Eczema association's seal of approval. Though the thick, velvety texture is a key selling point, if you’re not a fan of heavier moisturizers you may want to select something else.

Price at time of publish: \$20

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Best Reparative: Kiehl's Centella Sensitive Cica Cream

Kiehl's Centella Sensitive Cica Cream

PHOTO: KIEHL'S

[View On Sephora](#)

[View On Bloomingdales](#)

[View On Kiehls.com](#)

What We Love: This product contains D-panthenol — a star ingredient when it comes to repairing the skin barrier and restoring hydration.

What We Don’t Love: It can feel a bit tacky on skin.

Don't underestimate this little tube: What’s inside packs a serious dose of moisture. In addition to leaving the surface of the skin soft and smooth, Kiehl's hypoallergenic and fragrance-free cream repairs the skin barrier to prevent future dryness and helps reduce visible redness and fine lines. The secret is D-panthenol (also known as vitamin b5), which is this product's star ingredient. Overtime, D-panthenol increases your skin's ability to retain moisture. Essentially, when you apply this daily, your skin barrier becomes stronger, and though the slightly tacky texture can be off putting to some, the results are worth that minor inconvenience.

Price at time of publish: \$44

Skin Type: Dry to normal | **Size:** 1.7 oz. | **Active Ingredients:** Glycerin, Cacao seed butter, and D-panthenol

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Best for Nighttime MD Intense Moisturizer

[View On Dermstore](#)

What We Love: It provides 12 hours of hydration.

What We Don’t Love: It’s not ideal for daytime use.

Most heavy-duty moisturizers are thick, rich creams that never fully absorb into skin — but let us introduce you to the exception. Known as the "melting moisturizer," this EltaMD formula soaks into skin and locks in hydration for up to 12 hours, all while relieving redness and irritation. The simplistic formula is made up of just two ingredients: Petrolatum and paraffin, both of which are powerhouses at retaining moisture and warding off outside irritants. On nights when I’m feeling extra dry and flakey, this is the one thing that gets my skin back to normal by morning. Consider it a foolproof pick for sensitive skin types that also suffer from excessive dryness.

Price at time of publish: \$15

Skin Type: Dry and eczema-prone | **Size:** 2.8 oz. | **Active Ingredients:** Petrolatum

Best Fragrance-Free: First Aid Beauty Ultra Repair Face Moisturizer

First Aid Beauty Ultra Repair Face Moisturizer

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PHOTO: SEPHORA

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[View On Sephora](#)

[View On Firstaidbeauty.com](#)

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itchy, or flaky skin.


What We Don’t Love: Because it has a lightweight texture, you might need to apply multiple layers to quench severely dry skin.

First Aid Beauty is dedicated to creating simplistic skincare products that work for all skin types — especially sensitive skin — and this moisturizer (which I consider the bread and butter of my routine) is no exception. On top of hydrating skin with a mix of nourishing and soothing ingredients like meadowfoam seed oil, colloidal oatmeal, avocado oil, and ceramides, this lightweight formula leaves skin feeling smooth, making it ideal for wearing under makeup. I prefer to use this on days when my skin is feeling pretty normal (read: not too dry) because I find when I’m experiencing any sort of dryness I need to layer it on to quench my skin’s thirst.

Price at time of publish: \$28

Skin Type: All | **Size:** 1.7 oz. | **Active Ingredients:** Colloidal oatmeal, Avocado oil, Shea butter, and Meadowfoam seed oil

Best for Hyperpigmentation: Obagi Medical Obagi Hydrate Facial Moisturizer

 Obagi Medical Obagi Hydrate Facial Moisturizer

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[View On Amazon](#) \$52

[View On Walmart](#)

[View On Dermstore](#)

What We Love: This moisturizer is ideal for rebalancing dehydrated skin without being too overbearing (i.e. it’s not thick or difficult to spread onto skin).

What We Don’t Love: It’s hard to get every last drop out of the

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With an allergy-tested formula, Obagi Hydrate Facial Moisturizer is less likely to cause irritation compared to other creams. Plus, I was overjoyed to discover that this product is made for all skin types because Obagi is known for their intense and clinically proven anti-aging products. Powered by hydromanil — a super nourishing plant-based ingredient — this moisturizer helps skin retain hydration while simultaneously improving the appearance of hyperpigmentation and wrinkles.

Many reviews discuss the size of the product as small for the price, and that it’s difficult to get every last drop out of the bottle. With this in mind, there are more affordable sensitive skin moisturizers that come in larger sizes (CeraVe is a great example of this) but this is a good moisturizer to use as a more targeted approach to sensitive, hyperpigmented skin.

Price at time of publish: \$52

Skin Type: Combination to oily | **Size:** 1.7 oz. | **Active Ingredients:** Glycerin, Shea butter, Allantoin, and Mango seed butter

Best Anti-Aging: Shani Darden Skin Care Weightless Oil-Free Moisturizer

★★★★☆ 4.6

Shani Darden Skin Care Weightless Oil-Free Moisturizer

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[View On Violet Grey](#)

What We Love: This product is packed with anti-aging ingredients like red algae extract and hydrolyzed collagen.

What We Don’t Love: This is a lightweight product best for targeting specific skin concerns — so if you need more hydration, we recommend topping it off with a face oil.

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a greasy film on your face. Shani Darden's fragrance-free, oil-free moisturizer has a silky, serum-like texture that quickly absorbs into skin for a shine-free finish. It uses hydrolyzed collagen and red algae extract to provide [anti-aging](#) benefits, helping to restore elasticity and firmness. If you struggle with uneven skin tone, dullness, or a lack of radiance, this is a great moisturizer to try because it gives you that healthy, happy skin glow — similar to how your face looks after a fresh facial. That said, it isn't the most hydrating moisturizer, so if you need a little extra hydration you may want to apply a face oil over top.

Price at time of publish: \$48

Skin Type: Oily to dry, and mature | **Size:** 2.5 oz. | **Active Ingredients:** Sodium hyaluronate, Collagen, and Red algae extract

RELATED: [8 Clean Facial Serums for Every Anti-Aging Concern](#)

Best Gel: Belif The True Cream Aqua Bomb

★★★★★ 4.5

 Belif The True Cream Aqua Bomb

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[View On Ulta](#)

What We Love: This moisturizer is ideal for all skin types.

What We Don't Love: We wish it was fragrance-free, however, the scent is subtle.

Even if you're not skincare-obsessed, you've probably heard of Aqua Bomb: This water-based gel moisturizer is one of the most widely talked about moisturizers within the skin care community, and it quickly became a

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elastin within your skin barrier), malachite, and oat husk, the formula works to hydrate dry skin, fight free radicals, smooth the appearance of pores, and even skin tone. I always find myself falling back to this trusty cream because it feels like a refreshing splash of water on skin. And though it’s not fragrance-free, the scent is subtle enough to not irritate even the most sensitive complexions.

Price at time of publish: \$38

Skin Type: All | **Size:** 1.68 oz. | **Active Ingredients:** Lady’s mantle, Malachite, and Oat husk

Best with SPF: La Roche-Posay Toleriane Double Repair Face Moisturizer With SPF

 La Roche-Posay Toleriane Double Repair Face Moisturizer With SPF

PHOTO: WALGREENS

[View On Amazon](#) \$21

[View On Target](#)

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another sunscreen on top.

What We Don’t Love: It’s thicker than most SPF moisturizers we are used to, making it somewhat uncomfortable to reapply throughout the day.

If you’re looking for a basic SPF moisturizer, this is the only product you’ll ever need. Packed with ceramides and [niacinamide](#), it supports your skin barrier, minimizes the look of pores, and mattifies, while providing SPF 30 sun protection. We suggest applying this in the morning (it layers well with makeup) and reapplying SPF with a powder or spray throughout the day due to how thick it can feel if layered multiple times over.

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keep my skin in check. I love that it can be used year round, too — you’ll always catch this in both my ski bag ([winter sunburns are a thing too!](#)) and in my beach bag over the summer.

Price at time of publish: \$21

Skin Type: Dry to Normal | **Size:** 2.5 oz. | **Active Ingredients:** Ceramides and Niacinamide

What to Keep in Mind

Skin type

While sensitive skin is a skin type, it can teeter in between dry and oily as well. This is important to keep in mind to truly find a product that will work for your skin. If you lean dry, you’ll want to look for a formula that provides intense hydration like [REN Clean Skincare Evercalm Global Protection Day Cream](#) or [Kiehl's Centella Sensitive Cica Cream](#). On the other hand, if you tend to feel oily look for lightweight, oil-free creams like [Shani Darden Weightless Oil-Free Moisturizer](#) or [Neutrogena Oil-Free Ultra-Gentle Facial Moisturizer](#)

Key ingredients

Before detailing ingredients that sensitive skin can really benefit from, it’s important to know what to avoid — particularly fragrance. “While fragrances can add to the sensorial experience of using a skin care product, they commonly can lead to skin allergies and irritation,” says [Joshua Zeichner, M.D.](#), a New York City-based board-certified dermatologist. On the flip side, ceramides, vitamin b5, colloidal oatmeal, and shea butter, are key ingredients for repairing and replenishing a compromised skin barrier, and are pretty tolerable for those with sensitive skin. ([First Aid Beauty Ultra Repair Face Moisturizer](#) includes a few of the aforementioned

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What is sensitive skin?

"Skin that reacts strongly to most stimuli (including environment, temperature and products), skin with a decreased barrier function, and allergic skin (like eczema which also has a decreased barrier function) can all be categorized as sensitive skin," says [Morgan Rabach, M.D.](#), board-certified dermatologist and co-founder of [LM Medical](#) in New York City.

How can you determine if you have sensitive skin?

First things first, no skincare product should cause swelling, redness or hives, or a burning sensation. These are not normal reactions and are

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“The most common allergens in skin care are preservatives, fragrances, and other additives that cause sensitive skin to break out into an allergy,” says [Dr. Antony Nakhla](#), Mohs Surgeon and Founder of [Eighth Day Skin](#). “People who are prone to allergic reactions include those with conditions like asthma, hay fever, eczema, and other allergic-type conditions — although you may have allergic/sensitive skin and not have any of those conditions.”

To avoid bad reactions from skin care, it is important to patch test any products before applying it over a large area. Most doctors recommend doing this on your hand or the inside of your arm. If you have an allergic reaction, you should stop using the product immediately. If you have questions about what to do though, the best thing is to consult with your dermatologist to find the appropriate course of action.

What skincare ingredients should you avoid if you have sensitive skin?

[Caren Campbell, M.D.](#), a San Francisco-based board-certified dermatologist, suggests avoiding moisturizers with acids and retinoids if you have sensitive skin as the actives can cause irritation with overuse. The same goes for fragrance and essential oils.

On the other hand, there are some ingredients that may help minimize reactions. “It is important to help restore the balance of good bacteria to bad bacteria on the surface of the skin because any harsh products can easily throw off this balance and lead to facial redness and sensitivity,” adds Jennifer Weiss, a New York City-based Physician Assistant at [Marmur Medical](#). “Hyaluronic acid is a great ingredient to look for in moisturizers. It is naturally produced by the body to bind to and hold onto water. It acts as a sponge to lock in moisture and provide dewy, healthy skin. Niacinamide is another great ingredient for sensitive skin because it has anti-inflammatory properties.”

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you. “It’s best to avoid using these ingredients on the face,” says [Roberta Moradfar](#), Celebrity Aesthetics Nurse Practitioner & Founder of [EFFACÈ Aesthetics](#). “Coconut oil is highly comedogenic and will most likely clog your pores, while shea butter is so rich in fatty acids that it has an oily texture and can be overly greasy. Sensitive skin may respond negatively to these ingredients if congestion occurs.”

Should I only use fragrance-free moisturizers if I have sensitive skin?

It depends! You should always do a patch test when trying to introduce a new product within your skincare routine. [Not everyone is sensitive to](#)

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“I would definitely recommend avoiding added fragrances to products if you have sensitive skin,” says Moradfar. “There are products on the market that contain botanical and marine extracts that are known to help with sensitive skin and may have a natural, herbal/botanical smell. If one can tolerate those smells, it may be beneficial for them to use such ingredients as long as it’s not causing any issues.”

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Olivia Cefalu is a Brooklyn-based freelance beauty editor and writer. She covers everything beauty and wellness related, and has a real passion for SPF, a good facial, and nail art. With bylines in *Shape*, *Well & Good*, *Fatherly*, *Ipsy*, *Real Simple* and *Very Good Light*, her research is thorough and inspired by a passion for teaching others about beauty practices and products.

She has struggled with eczema throughout her life and navigated very difficult food and skincare product allergies. Her best advice to anyone struggling with sensitive skin is to avoid known allergies, get a patch test from your dermatologist if needed, read product descriptions thoroughly, and when in doubt go back to the basics! There is no shame in ‘basic’ skincare products that are proven to work and hydrate compromised skin and skin barriers. For this story she spoke with board-certified dermatologists [Dr. Morgan Rabach](#), [Dr. Joshua Zeichner](#), [Dr. Caren Campbell](#), and [Dr. Antony Nakhla](#). She also spoke with Jennifer Weiss, a New York City-based Physician Assistant at [Marmur Medical](#), and [Roberta Moradfar](#), Celebrity Aesthetics Nurse Practitioner & Founder of [EFFACÈ Aesthetics](#)

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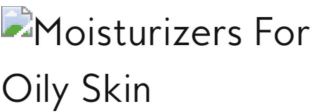
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By Rebecca Norris



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The 10 Best Moisturizers For Oily Skin in 2022, Tested and Reviewed

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