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Beauty » Skin

What Is the Retinol Sandwich Trend on TikTok?



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Although it sounds more like a reference to a menu option than a skincare hack, the #retinolsandwich trend is racking up billions of views (10.4 to be exact) on TikTok as one of the latest viral beauty trends.

First things first, just in case you need a refresher: Retinol is the synthetic over-the-counter cousin of the prescription-strength version retinoid, which when applied topically on your skin, retinol has to be converted to retinoic acid by enzymes found in the skin while the Rx does not. However, both are a vitamin A-derivative that dermatologists *swear* by in essentially everyone’s skincare routine.

The track record of retinol as well as Rx retinoid is impressive to say the least. “It increases cell turnover to help exfoliate the skin and prevents acne breakouts,” says Jennifer Weiss, a dermatology physician’s assistant at Marmur Medical in New York City. “And as skin cells turnover, retinol can work to fade dark spots and help brighten the skin as well as have anti-aging effects by stimulating collagen production, which in turn helps smooth fine lines and wrinkles.” The bottom line? It’s an ingredient superhero.

But there are downsides to working retinol into your routine. “One of the side effects can be irritation, flaking, or dryness,” notes Weiss. “I recommend using both over-the-counter and prescription versions although Rx Retin-A is stronger because it is pure retinoic acid so it will tend to be more drying than over-the-counter retinol.”

MEET THE EXPERTS

[Jennifer Weiss](#), is a dermatology physician’s assistant at Marmur Medical in New York City.

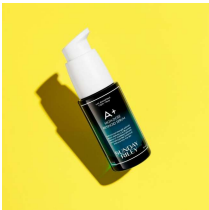
[Shani Darden](#), is a celebrity esthetician in Beverly Hills.

Enter: the “retinol sandwich” concept, which as the pros we spoke to point out, is nothing new. Here’s why: Skin experts have long touted the potential benefits of layering retinol with moisturizer as a means of minimizing the aforementioned negative effects of dryness, flakes, and irritation. But *how* you make your retinol sandwich matters. Read on to learn more and master the #retinolsandwich.

WHAT IS A RETINOL SANDWICH?

“To sandwich the retinol with moisturizer before and after application to prevent potential irritation is a great tip,” says Weiss. “The moisturizer *before* acts as a barrier to combat any irritation from the retinol and moisturizing *after* helps seal the moisture in.”

[Shani Darden](#), a celebrity esthetician in Beverly Hills with her own namesake skincare, is also pro retinol sandwich, especially when it comes to retinoid or retinol newbies or those with super sensitive skin. “If you’re new to retinol or your skin is on the sensitive side but you still want to use a retinol in your routine, layering it with a moisturizer can be a great way to introduce it,” she notes. “Layering moisturizer and retinol can help dilute it so that you’re still getting the benefits of retinol while keeping skin comfortable — this is particularly effective with prescription formulas which are hard to tolerate, especially in the long term.”



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HOW TO MAKE A RETINOL SANDWICH



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It turns out the type of moisturizer you use — or don’t use — as well as how and when you apply them could be the game changer. Weiss explains that “a skin care routine should *always* start off with the thinnest to thickest products, which is also true for both retinol and moisturizer,” she says.

Here’s retinol sandwich layering 101, according to Weiss: “For instance, a hyaluronic acid serum should be applied before a retinol cream; if you’re using a retinol serum, this should be applied prior to the hyaluronic acid serum and the same is true if a patient is using a retinol serum but a moisturizing cream like Repose Serum by MMSkincare.”

Dr. Whitney Bowe’s viral video on the social media platform shares her hacks — always start with a hydrating serum, wait for it to properly soak into skin before moving on to retinol and finishing with a cream. But beware: slugging (aka using a formula with petroleum jelly) is an absolute no since you don’t want to push the retinol or retinoid too far into skin and exacerbate irritation (especially when the point of this trend is to combat that in the first place).

Darden, who created her own celebrity-loved Retinol Reform, “recommends using a retinol serum and following up with a great moisturizer for your skin type that, of course, does not contain retinol,” she says. “A retinol serum is going to have the highest concentration of retinol, so you’ll get the most benefit from it.”

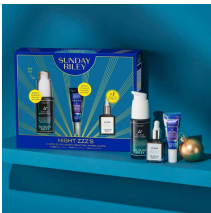
THE PROS AND CONS

Well, if your skin is stellar with a retinoid or retinol then why mess with a good thing, right? Rest easy knowing you’re receiving all the benefits of the ingredient and not experiencing anything negative (yay, you!). Of course, if your skin gets red or irritated easily and especially if it’s eczema or rosacea prone, Weiss says this is for you. Not sure? Baby-step into a retinol sandwich to decide if it’s required for your skin type.

“I do not typically start off recommending the sandwiching method,” Weiss explains. “I start off having a client moisturize only after an application of the retinol, using it twice weekly spaced out, for example on a Monday and Thursday, and then add in a new night every two weeks.” If any sign of irritation or dryness pops up by week six, she suggests the sandwiching

method “and make sure they’re utilizing a non-comedogenic thicker cream moisturizer at night.”

Darden does warn that by adding the two layers, there is the chance of diluting the potency of the powerhouse ingredient. “You won’t get the full benefits,” she adds. Weiss doesn’t think it’s too much cause for concern especially if it means incorporating retinol in your routine or ditching it entirely. “Although some skin experts say this method could diminish the effectiveness and absorption of the retinol, I do not find this to be true for my patients,” she adds.



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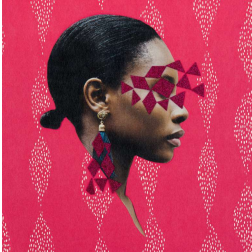
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