


STYLE > SKINCARE

# Ask a Beauty Editor: Are LED Masks Worth the Cost?

These light-emitting face masks are making waves (wavelengths, to be exact) in the skincare game.

By [Hana Hong](#) | Updated on February 22, 2023

 Fact checked by [Isaac Winter](#)



*We independently research, test, review, and recommend the best products—learn more about [our process](#). If you buy something through our links, we may earn a commission.*



CARRASTOCK

*Ever wanted to pick the brain of a beauty editor? Or get beauty product recommendations from someone who has tried them all? You've come to the right place. In our weekly series, beauty editor Hana Hong answers your biggest skincare, hair care, and makeup questions, all submitted by Real Simple readers. Tune in every Tuesday and submit your own burning beauty questions [here](#) for a chance to be featured.*

**Reader question: Are LED light masks worth the cost? — [laurafranz7](#)**

If you've ever seen someone wearing a Stormtrooper-looking facial device for the sake of skincare, you're probably familiar with light-emitting diode (LED) masks. These machines aren't cheap—they can range anywhere between \$100 to \$1000—but their claims are pretty impressive, from brightening to anti-aging to acne-busting.

So then comes the million dollar (or \$250, \$700...however much the LED mask you want costs) question: Is it actually worth the

SUBSCRIBE

my vote: yes — if you get the right one for you. Not all LED masks are equal (more on that later), so it's important that you use one that best suits your skincare needs.

But ultimately, the convenience itself is worthwhile—you can literally do it while chilling in bed and sipping pinot. Not to mention that it's financially smart in the long run—although it may take longer, you can reap the same results you would get in an in-office treatment, all while saving the effort of commuting to the doctor and money for office visits.

Here's everything you need to know about the futuristic tech.

How do LED masks work?

LED light therapy actually comes from NASA technology where it was used to heal wounds and quell inflammation. It then made its way into dermatology clinics, where it eventually evolved into portable, at-home LED devices.

What do these colorful lights do? "LED masks are programmed to emit light in a certain color, which corresponds to its respective wavelength within the visible light spectrum (think ROY- G- BIV!)," says Christine Choi Kim, MD, board-certified dermatologist. "These gadgets target different depths of the skin, where the light is then absorbed by skin receptors." Different wavelengths create a different response on the skin, and the skin benefits are dependent on the color of light emitted.

"Unlike the photo-damage induced by in-office lasers, this is a much more gentle way of altering skin function. However, because they are less powerful than the treatments you'd get at a dermatologist's office, it may take longer to see visible results," adds [Rachel Maiman](#), MD, board-certified dermatologist at [Marmur Medical](#).

What are the benefits of LED masks?

LED masks for the skin help treat a variety of different skin concerns, such as firming the skin, combating wrinkles, reducing inflammation, preventing breakouts, and regulating oil production.

Green light is typically used for hyperpigmentation by targeting melanocytes, quelling toxic free radicals, and breaking up melanin clusters. "It inhibits the production of excess melanin and prevents it from traveling to the skin surface," says Dr. Maiman. On the other hand, red light triggers cells called fibroblasts to produce collagen and elastin, making it ideal for anti-aging. This can help reduce the appearance of wrinkles and thin skin.

And lastly, blue light is typically used to treat acne. "Blue light stimulates the production of oxygen radicals that kill the acne-causing bacteria C. acnes," says Dr. Maiman. "It has also been



## Can you use different LED lights at the same time?

Absolutely! "Because red light has also been shown to reduce the production of cytokines, which cause inflammation, it is commonly used in combination with blue light to manage inflammatory conditions like acne and rosacea," says Dr. Maiman.

## Are there any side effects to LED masks?

After years of being taught that UV light is dangerous, it might seem counterintuitive to intentionally treat your face with light. But don't worry—LED light is completely safe and won't cause any damage. In fact, LED masks have an "excellent" safety profile, according to a review published in February 2018 in the Journal of Clinical and Aesthetic Dermatology.<sup>[1]</sup> "LEDs are usually very safe for all skin colors and types as the procedure is non-invasive and does not require the application of any topicals with the potential for irritation," agrees Dr. Maiman.

That being said, Dr. Kim says that there are some concerns of eye damage, especially if you have a history of seizures or migraines triggered by bright lights, so always shield the eyes or wear eye protection when using a LED device. People who take photosensitizing medications like lithium, certain antipsychotics, or some antibiotics should avoid LED light altogether.

[Marina Peredo](#), MD, board-certified dermatologist, also notes that you may experience redness and tenderness if overused. Make sure to check the specific guidelines of the product you are using; according to Dr. Kim, exposure times with LED masks are typically short (10 to 20 minutes) and only need to be performed several times a week. If you notice any redness or signs of sensitivity, stop immediately and consult a dermatologist.

## How long will it take to see results?

If you're looking to see an instant improvement, at-home LED light therapy probably isn't for you. Remember what I said about these gadgets not being nearly as powerful as an in-office treatment? You'll likely have to wait a minimum of four to six weeks, or longer, to notice any visible skin improvements. "Make sure you are the type of person who will be consistent with using it because it won't do any good otherwise," adds Dr. Kim.

Also, it's helpful to keep your expectations in check. If you have more established wrinkles or severe (read: cystic) acne, talk to your dermatologist about other possible treatments (like Botox or Accutane), as your skin may not be very responsive to at-home light therapy.

SUBSCRIBE

If you're curious to try LED masks at home, shop some of my favorites below.

## Our Top Picks

**MOST COMFORTABLE:**

[CurrentBody Skin LED Light Therapy Mask at Amazon](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**MOST AFFORDABLE:**

[Skin Gym WrinkLit LED Mask at Bloomingdales](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**MOST POPULAR:**

[Dr. Dennis Gross DrX SpectraLite FaceWare Pro at Amazon](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**DERMATOLOGIST FAVORITE:**

[MMSkincare MMSphere 2GO at Mmskincare.com](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**MOST AESTHETIC:**

[MZ Skin Light Therapy Treatment at Dermstore](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**BEST FOR NECK AND CHEST:**

[OmniLux Contour Neck & Décolleté at Omniluxled.com](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**MOST VERSATILE:**

[FOREO UFO Smart Mask Treatment at Amazon](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**BEST TARGETED:**

[SolaWave Wand at Amazon](#)

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

## Most Comfortable: CurrentBody Skin LED Light Therapy Mask

PHOTO: AMAZON



SUBSCRIBE

[View On Currentbody.com](#)

Unlike most LED masks, this one is made from patented flexible silicone that wraps perfectly around the face, meaning the light can effectively penetrate every contour of your face. It's great for those who want a brighter, firmer complexion; the device uses a combination of red (633nm) and near infrared light (830nm) to stimulate skin.

**Most Affordable: Skin Gym WrinkLit LED Mask**

PHOTO: ULTA BEAUTY

[View On Bloomingdales](#)

[View On Jcpenney.com](#)

[View On Skingymco.com](#)

Ringling in at under \$100, this wireless mask offers three different wavelengths—red, blue, and orange—to target multiple skincare concerns.

**Most Popular: Dr. Dennis Gross DrX SpectraLite FaceWare Pro**

★★★★★ 4.8

SUBSCRIBE

[View On Amazon](#) \$455

[View On Nordstrom](#)

[View On Bloomingdales](#)

Loved by beauty editors, dermatologists, and customers alike, this FDA-approved creation is the cream of the LED mask crop. A combination of 100 lights in red mode and 62 lights in blue mode work in conjunction to smooth over wrinkles, diminish discoloration, and fight blemishes. And because it's *almost* as strong as the light therapy treatments you can get at the derm, all it takes is three minutes of application.

### Dermatologist Favorite: MMSkincare MMSphere 2GO

PHOTO: MM SKINCARE

[View On Mmskincare.com](#)

"The MMSphere 2GO has the greatest range of colors in any FDA-cleared home device," says Dr. Maiman. "It has nine light settings, as well as the ability to pair two colors together (for instance, violet for a simultaneous delivery of blue and red)." Bonus: It even includes amber light, a mood-boosting hue often used to treat seasonal affective disorder.

### Most Aesthetic: MZ Skin Light-Therapy Golden Facial Treatment Device

SUBSCRIBE

[View On Dermstore](#)

[View On Net-a-Porter](#)

[View On Skinstore.com](#)

The most Instagram-friendly award goes to MZ Skin's mask, which looks like something you'd wear to a bougie *Phantom of the Opera* event. But the benefits don't just stop there—it also offers five different light modes (red, blue, green, and the less common yellow and white) so you can cover all the skincare bases. Yellow light treats redness and increases circulation, while white light repairs wounds to the skin.

### Best for Neck and Chest: OmniLux Contour Neck & Décolleté

PHOTO: OMNILUX

[View On Omniluxled.com](#)

Don't neglect your neck and dec, which are usually the biggest visual indicators of our true age. This LED mask straps around your neck and sits across the chest to combat wrinkles, pigmentation, and thinning skin due to sun exposure and other environmental toxins.

"Omnilux home-use devices are based on the same professional-grade technology as the Omnilux Medical phototherapy system used in many dermatologists' offices," adds Dr. Kim, so you know you're getting the real deal.



SUBSCRIBE

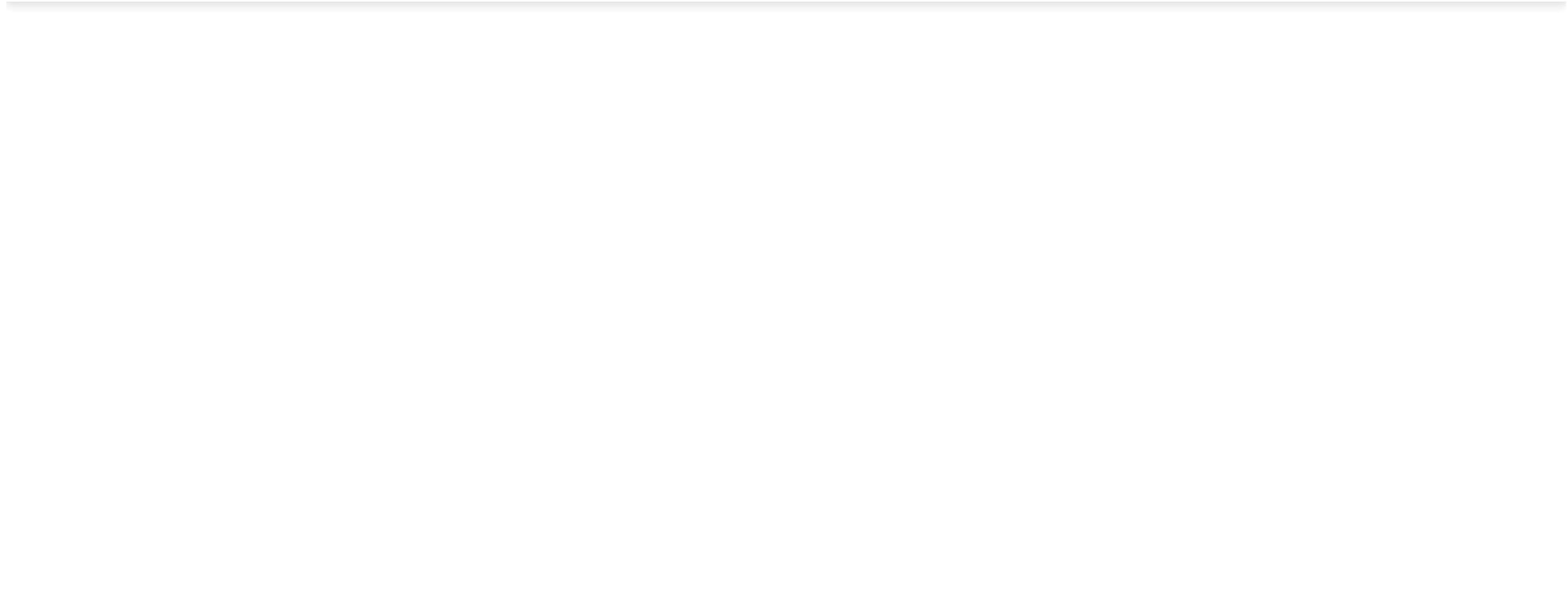


PHOTO: AMAZON

[View On Amazon](#)   \$180

[View On Foreo.com](#)

[View On Revolve](#)

Your skincare needs change over time, but this mask will adapt with it. The handheld device's LED lights, pulsations, and hot and cold sonic waves are meant to be paired with your fave face mask or serum; together, they work to stimulate skin cells and boost the penetrative power of your face mask ingredients. The whole experience can be completed in two minutes (making it perfect for people on the go) and is customizable—you can adjust the wavelength, temperature, and pulsation settings on your smartphone after downloading the app.

## Best Targeted: SolaWave Advanced Skincare Wand



PHOTO: AMAZON

[View On Amazon](#)   \$140

[View On Neiman Marcus](#)







SUBSCRIBE

OK, so this one isn't a face mask *per se*, but this souped-up face roller has a super unique way of reaping the benefits of LED light. The razor-sized tool radiates microcurrent warmth while blasting your choice of red or [blue light](#) (sold separately). Glide it all over your face for a soothing facial massage or focus on certain areas for more targeted treatment.

Was this page helpful?  

SOURCES 

## Related Articles

 Best Acne Products tout	<div>SHOPPING</div> <div>The 16 Best Acne Products of 2023</div> <div>By Samantha Parsons</div>
 kb-digital-issue-STYLE-The-New-Easy-Sunscreens-	<div>SKINCARE</div> <div>The New, Easy Sunscreens: UV Protection for a New Age</div> <div>By Melanie Rud</div>
 how-to-get-rid-of-acne-scars: woman covering her face	<div>SKINCARE</div> <div>How to Get Rid of Acne Scars, According to Dermatologists</div> <div>By Hana Hong</div>
	<div>FACECARE</div> <div>Ask a Beauty Editor: How to Get Rid of Redness From Acne</div> <div>By Hana Hong</div>
 facial-treatment: woman getting facial	<div>SKINCARE</div> <div>How to Choose the Right Facial for Your Skin Type and Needs</div> <div>By Kristin Granero</div>
 Commerce Photo Composite	<div>SHOPPING</div> <div>The 12 Best Face Sunscreens of 2023</div> <div>By Marisa Petrarca</div>
 Top view of different cosmetic bottles and container	<div>SKINCARE</div> <div>9 Best Skincare Lines Founded by Dermatologists</div> <div>By Kelsey Haywood Lucas</div>