

## BEAUTY

# Meet Ectoin, the Buzzy Skincare Ingredient That's Being Touted as the New Niacinamide

FOR ONE, IT'S GREAT FOR ALL SKIN TYPES

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### Show Purposes

Hyaluronic acid and niacinamide are known for hydrating ingredient on the rise. Allow us to introduce you to ectoin, which prevents moisture loss, combats dryness and protects skin from environmental aggressors. According to Beauty Pie's recent 2024 Trend Report, ectoin is everywhere in the new year, so we asked three skincare experts to share their thoughts.

## Meet the Experts

- McKenzie Bolt Rose is a licensed esthetician and director of global education for Biossance. She has 12 years of experience in the skincare industry and currently oversees the brand's educational initiatives. Previously, she worked as an esthetician and brand ambassador for both Groupe Clarins and Tata Harper Skincare.
- Dr. Teresa Song is a board-certified dermatologist at Marmur Medical in New York. She specializes in general and cosmetic dermatology, including aesthetic procedures like fillers, laser devices, microneedling and chemical peels. Dr. Song also serves as a clinical instructor at Mount Sinai Hospital Dermatology residency and is a member of the American Academy of Dermatology.
- David Richard Petrillo is a cosmetic chemist and founder of Perfect Image. He has two decades of experience, specializing in non-surgical cosmetic procedures such as chemical peels and clarifying treatments. He currently has his own skincare line, which targets concerns like fine lines, wrinkles, breakouts, enlarged pores and hyperpigmentation.

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## What is Ectoin?

Ectoin is an amino acid known as an osmolyte, which is derived from different types of bacteria. It's known to balance and bind water molecules in the skin to give it a smoother and softer surface. According to Dr. Song, the ingredient also serves as a protective shield against environmental stressors as it's "produced by bacteria under extreme temperature and osmotic stress to preserve their cellular integrity and regulate water balance."

Chemists first discovered ectoin in the '80s, but it flew under the radar...until now. As Rose notes, "Ectoin is not a new ingredient, but it's finally getting the recognition it deserves! It's a workhorse of an ingredient that improves your skin's hydration and helps repair it from daily stressors." It's usually found in serums, moisturizers and even some sunscreens. And some even say it's a better alternative to hyaluronic acid and niacinamide (but more on that later.)

## What Are the Benefits of Ectoin?

Ectoin is a multi-tasking ingredient with loads of benefits, including the four main points below.

- **It can hydrate skin and prevent moisture loss.** "It has strong water-binding capabilities and greater efficacy in maintaining hydration compared to other humectants. Ectoin also demonstrates long-term moisturizing capabilities," says Petrillo.

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- **It can protect against environmental stressors.** “Ectoin has been shown to protect the skin from various environmental stressors including heavy metals, blue and visible light and pigmentation resulting from oxidative stress,” says Petrillo. “It has also been found to protect the skin barrier when compromised by harsh surfactants, extreme temperatures, aging and UV exposure.” Note: This doesn’t mean ectoin is an alternative to sunscreen; rather, it provides another layer of protection for your skin.

## Are There Any Downsides to Using Ectoin?

The experts we interviewed say ectoin is safe to use. However, if you have a known allergy to ectoin, it’s best to steer clear of it. Also, if you’re pregnant, breastfeeding and/or have any existing skincare conditions (like psoriasis, dermatitis, etc.), you should consult with a medical professional before implementing ectoin into your skincare routine.

## Which Skin Types Can Use Ectoin?

Good news is that ectoin can be used on all skin types, but it’s especially great for dry, sensitive and mature skin. “It acts as a natural hydrator and will soothe rough, dry patches and irritation,” explains Rose.

## Is Ectoin Better Than Niacinamide?

“Ectoin and niacinamide are both great for hydration and soothing the skin. It’s hard to say which ingredient is superior, as they each have great benefits and can be used together,” says Dr. Song. The main difference between the two is niacinamide does a better job at reducing the appearance of dark spots and large pores, whereas ectoin offers deeper hydration and longer-lasting protection from daily stressors. However, they’re even better when they’re paired together, so there’s no need to pit them against each other.

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## The Main Takeaway

Ectoin shouldn't be slept on. The ingredient is a great option if you're looking for something additional to hydrate and protect your skin. Whether it's a serum or a moisturizer, consider adding ectoin into your skincare routine. (And bonus points if you mix it with a hyaluronic acid or niacinamide.)

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