

BEAUTY

Repair Your Skin Barrier to Prevent Dryness, Redness and Breakouts — Dermatologists Share the At-Home Fix



PeopleImages/Getty

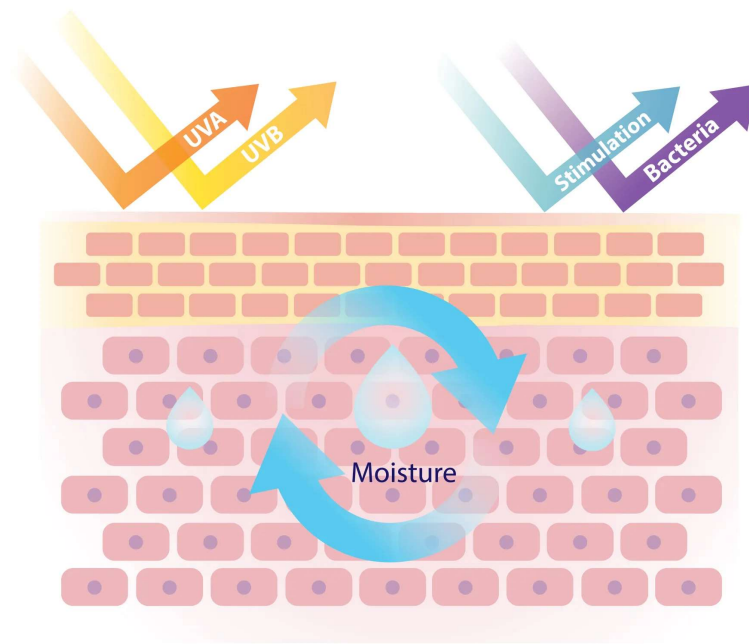
By [Amber Katz](#) | February 13, 2024

The skin barrier is an oft-mentioned topic these days. It comes up in the pages of magazines and on social media, likely as a result of just how much exfoliating we're all doing. And when the skin barrier is damaged, it causes skin to become dry and irritated, plus makes us prone to breakouts. This is why it's important to do skin barrier repair treatments to help restore the skin's protective function. Thankfully, there are many ways to mend your skin barrier, including using gentle cleansers and moisturizers, avoiding harsh soaps and scrubs, and using skin-strengthening products. Here, we talked to top dermatologists [Mona Gohara, MD](#) and [Rachel Westbay, MD](#) about everything you need to know about the skin barrier.

What is the skin barrier?

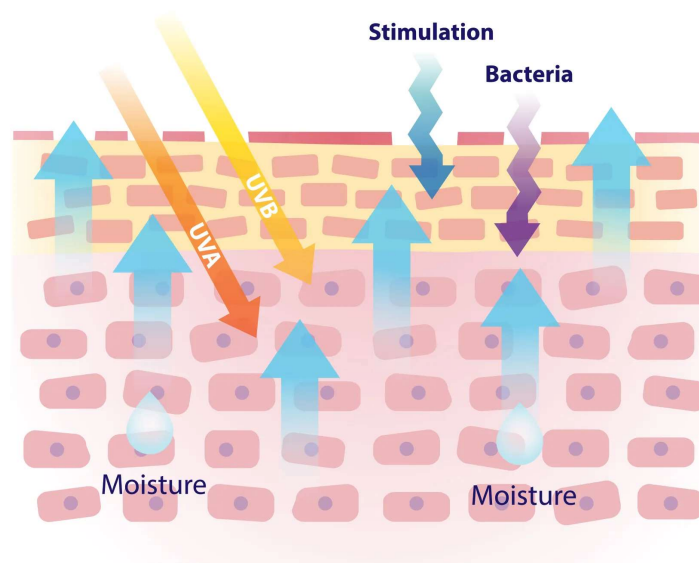
*vitapix/Getty*

The skin barrier refers to the outermost layer of skin. “Think of a brick and mortar model,” says Dr. Gohara. “Skin cells are the bricks; mortar is the barrier. It’s comprised of protein and fatty acids that help to keep water locked in and irritants out.”



Healthy skin barrier

Mosterpiece/Getty



Damaged skin barrier

Mosterpiece/Getty

Dr. Westbay adds that the skin is the body's largest organ and serves as the primary line of immune defense against the external environment. "[The skin barrier] plays a crucial role in preserving the body's homeostasis by regulating temperature," she explains. "Additionally, the skin barrier supports the microbiome, consisting of healthy microorganisms residing on our skin, providing nutrients and a protective barrier."

To learn more about the skin barrier, watch this YouTube video from dermatologist [Shereene Idriss, MD](#).

What causes the skin barrier to become damaged?

"Compromised barrier function is at play when the skin is dry, itchy, irritated or inflamed," says Dr. Gohara. This can be caused by a number of things such

as external stressors, genetic predispositions and disease processes, notes Dr. Westbay.

External stressors include daily exposure to UV rays and the accumulation of free radicals, which can weaken the skin barrier. Also, “physical exfoliators can cause breakage in the skin barrier, facilitating entry of irritants, while chemical exfoliators can also thin out the barrier,” says Dr. Westbay. And besides scrubs, harsh detergents in soaps can strip protective oils from skin, weakening its barrier.

Additionally, some of us may have, thanks to genetics, a different protein composition, leading to a weaker and more reactive barrier, such as those with **eczema-prone skin**, says Dr. Westbay. And “similarly, those with inflammatory skin conditions may experience a compromised barrier due to abnormal protein production.”

What can happen when the skin barrier is damaged?

Dr. Westbay notes that when the skin barrier is compromised, its ability to protect against external stressors and irritants decreases, which lead to microorganisms imbalances on the skin. “As irritants more easily penetrate a defective skin barrier, there is an increased likelihood of developing irritation and rashes,” she says. “The imbalanced microbiome can also lead to overgrowth of pathogenic bacteria, contributing to acne breakouts and even skin infections.”

Why it's important to do skin barrier repair treatments



MarsBars/Getty

Regardless of how good we are at keeping our skin barrier intact, inevitably there will be a bit of compromise, says Dr. Gohara. That is why she says it's "important to care for it, and make sure any issue with barrier function is treated with gentle grooming, protection from the elements, and barrier repair creams."

Dr. Westbay agrees that skin barrier repair treatments are essential as they nourish and hydrate skin, provide protection against daily stressors, prevent rashes and breakouts and promote a better complexion over all. "A well-maintained skin barrier is also less likely to show signs of aging, which often

results from accumulated damage due to oxidative stress,” she explains. “For those with underlying skin conditions, maintaining the skin barrier is a crucial component of their treatment plans, reducing the frequency of disease outbreaks.”

How to repair your skin barrier

Maintaining the skin barrier involves consistent daily **skin care routines** that deliver essential ingredients for skin. Dr. Westbay recommends creating a routine that includes starting with a gentle, hydrating cleanser that preserves skin’s natural moisture and microorganisms. This will remove excess oil, dirt and other impurities on the surface of skin. Then, she recommends applying topical antioxidants (like in a serum) “to help mitigate environmental oxidative stress, and [follow it with] a skin repairing moisturize.” And a **morning skin care routine** should end with a tinted **mineral sunscreen** for UV protection. Bonus: She adds that treating skin with a nourishing mask once or twice a week can also help to strengthen the barrier.

Related: [Why Skin Pros Say to Swap Your Everyday Cleanser for Micellar Water + How It Removes Makeup in Just a Few Swipes](#)

The best skin barrier repair products

Read on to see the picks from Dr. Westbay and Dr. Gohara.

Best skin barrier repair products for the face



TRNR

TRNR Skin Prebiotic Lipid Nourishing Moisturizer ([Buy from TRNR, \\$48](#))

This moisturizer boasts ceramides to help repair and maintain the skin barrier. Plus, it contains squalane (it hydrates) and prebiotics (they balance skin's pH level) to keep the complexion healthy.



Make Beauty

Make Beauty Hydrascope Moisturizing Reverse Emulsion ([Buy from Make Beauty, \\$36](#))

If you like thick moisturizers, you will love this rich cream. Its vegan ceramides and fermented aloe moisturize and repair dehydrated skin. Best of all, besides helping with skin barrier repair, it also reduces the appearance of wrinkles.



RoC Barrier Renew Moisturizer ([Buy from RoC Skincare, \\$34.99](#))

Dr. Westbay likes this cream, which contains ceramides, green tea antioxidants and [peptides](#). All of these ingredients help maintain skin barrier and hydration — plus, its vitamin C and SPF 30 content make it ideal for daytime.

RoC



SoonJung 2x Barrier Intensive Cream ([Buy from Soko Glam, \\$20](#))

For a well-priced moisturizer, Dr. Westbay recommends this cream. It contains vitamin B as a humectant to preserve moisture and centella plant extracts to repair a weak, irritated skin barrier.

Soko Glam



MM Skincare

MMRevive Hydrating Face Mask ([Buy from MM Skincare, \\$22](#))

This mask is a favorite of Dr. Westbay since it contains [adaptogens](#) and pre-probiotics. These additives nourish the skin's microbiome and also has anti-inflammatory arnica and antioxidant-rich deep sea enzymes to further mend skin.

Related: [8 Best Moisturizers for Rosacea-Prone Skin, According to Dermatologists](#)

Best skin barrier repair products for the body



Vaseline/Amazon

Vaseline Radiant X Even Tone Body Lotion ([Buy from Amazon, \\$15.99](#))

Dr. Gohara loves this lotion for the body, because “it was designed with diverse skin tones in mind. And the deep nourishment body cream’s cocoa and shea butters help to bring out [a] glow.”



La Roche-Posay/Amazon

La Roche-Posay Lipikar Intense Repair Body Lotion ([Buy from Amazon, \\$19.99](#))

Rich in ceramides, glycerin, and niacinamide, this is another lotion favorite of Dr. Gohara’s. These moisturizing and anti-inflammatory ingredients are great for strengthening a compromised barrier, she says.



Dove Body Love Cream Oil Restoring Care Body Lotion ([Buy from Walmart, \\$6.48](#))

This lotion contains glycerin and stearic acid, which work together to fortify skin. Dr. Gohara says this pick is a lighter alternative for those who feel creams are too heavy.

Dove/Walmart

First For Women aims to feature only the best products and services. We update when possible, but deals expire and prices can change. If you buy something via one of our links, we may earn a commission. Questions? Reach us at shop@firstforwomen.com

For more skin care secrets, click through these stories:

[The Secret to a Natural-Looking Sun-Kissed Glow All Year Long — No Sun Needed](#)

[The \\$9 Serum That Works Like Botox + More Viral Botox Dupes You Can Do From Home](#)