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SKINCARE

Peptides Vs. Ceramides: Is One Better Than the Other? We Asked Dermatologists

How ceramides and peptides "work best as a team."

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Shannon Garlin

Associate Editor



Getty Images


In this article

Our top picks

What are peptides?

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SEE 5 MORE 

It's hard to keep up with the ever-growing list of skin care ingredients, but two terms you're likely familiar with are peptides and ceramides. From drugstore to luxury beauty, chances are these buzzwords are front and center on packaging.

These ingredients boast tons of benefits and have become a staple in popular skin care items on the market, but is there a difference between the two? Below, dermatologists help us understand how ceramides and peptides work and differ. And spoiler alert: they're best used together.

Our top picks

Best peptide and ceramide products



Award-winning peptide toner

Medicube PDRN Pink Peptide Toner

\$18.30
~~\$20.20~~

AMAZON

Learn more 



Best peptide serum for scap

The Ordinary Multi-Peptide Serum

\$22.80

AMAZON

Learn more 



Award-winning peptide cream

Paula's Choice Pro-Collagen Peptide Plumping Moisturizer

\$49.00

AMAZON

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Best for sensitive skin

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What are peptides?

There's a lot of science behind peptides; dermatologist Dr. Ellen Marmur explains that peptides are a short chain of amino acids, which are the building blocks of proteins. "In skincare, they may signal the skin to produce more collagen, elastin, and other proteins that can help maintain a firm, youthful appearance," Marmur says.

Alongside anti-aging benefits like fine lines, dermatologist Dr. Helyn Alvarez adds that they also act as messengers that tell cells to calm inflammation and improve skin repair. "Some calm reactivity and support repair, and others help the barrier work better and can target puffiness or uneven tone," says Alvarez.

What are ceramides?

While peptides repair from the inside, ceramides work to protect the skin's top barrier. Both dermatologists explain that ceramides are lipids that naturally occur in the skin, making up the outer layer. "They form a critical part of the skin's barrier, helping to lock in moisture and protect against environmental damage, irritants, and dehydration," adds Marmur.

However, as we age, Alvarez notes that certain factors will cause levels to drop, such as aging, eczema, harsh cleansers and overuse of retinoids. Thankfully, ceramides in moisturizers can help counteract this and restore and hydrate the skin's barrier, prevent dryness and reduce irritation.

Can you use ceramides and peptides together?

Dermatologists across the board agree that these ingredients complement each other

well; while they do different jobs, they work best as a team, says Alvarez. And incorporating them into your skin care routine is easy.

"Layer a peptide serum first, then a ceramide moisturizer to lock it in. If your skin feels tight or reactive, prioritize ceramides for a few days, then add peptides," she says. If your skin feels comfortable, she says you can consistently use both for the best results, "plus daily sunscreen."

Best peptide products

Good Molecules Super Peptide Serum



\$12.00 at Amazon

\$12.00 at Ulta

\$12.00 at Good Molecules

What to Consider



A dermatologist previously recommended this peptide serum for its multi-skin benefits. It contains copper peptides, which help hydrate, reduce the appearance of wrinkles and promote collagen production.

Medicube PDRN Pink Peptide Toner

\$18.30

~~\$20.20~~ at Amazon

Now 9% off

\$18.90

~~\$27.00~~ at Medicube

Now 30% off

What to Consider

▼

A Shop TODAY Beauty Awards winner, this peptide-infused toner works well with all skin types and can help hydrate and plump skin, say the brand.

The Ordinary Multi-Peptide Serum

Editor's pick



\$22.80 at Amazon

\$22.80 at The Ordinary

\$22.80 at Sephora

What to Consider



Your scalp is considered skin, too, and this editor-loved and former Beauty Award-winning peptide serum supports the scalp to promote healthier and fuller hair. I [Garlin] love that this treatment also works to stop the scalp from flaking and feeling dry.

First Aid Beauty Firming Collagen Cream

\$44.00 at Amazon

\$44.00 at Ulta

\$44.00 at Sephora

What to Consider



This serum is a previous [dermatologist-recommended cream](#) for its formulation of peptides, niacinamide and collagen. The trifecta of ingredients can help hydrate, improve dullness and the appearance of pores.

Summer Fridays Light Aura Vitamin C + Peptide Eye Cream



\$44.00 at Amazon

\$44.00 at Sephora

\$44.00 at Summer Fridays

What to Consider



Deputy managing editor [Jess Bender](#) says this [eye cream](#) has become a part of her nightly skin care routine. “So far, it’s really done a great job ironing out some finer lines that come along during my everyday,” she says.

Paula's Choice Pro-Collagen Peptide Plumping Moisturizer



\$49.00 at Amazon

\$39.20 ~~\$49.00~~ at Paula's Choice
Now 20% off

\$49.00 at Sephora

What to Consider



Another Beauty Award winner, this gel-based peptide cream has a lightweight consistency to help plump and hydrate the skin, without feeling heavy.

Drunk Elephant Protini Polypeptide Cream

Editor's pick



\$24.00 at Amazon

\$72.00 at Ulta

\$72.00 at Sephora

What to Consider



Loved by multiple editors, including myself, this moisturizer contains nine different peptides to help retain moisture and plump the skin. This cream is in my current moisturizer rotation, as it's very absorbent, leaving my face feeling smooth and moisturized. Plus, I like that you can buy the refillable packs, so you're not paying the full \$72 each time.

Best ceramide products

Eucerin Eczema Relief Cream

\$12.97 at Amazon

\$11.97 at CVS Photo

\$12.97 at Walmart

What to Consider



If you're dealing with eczema or extremely dry skin, this cream is packed with ceramides and colloidal oatmeal to help soothe the skin. One expert previously recommended it as it "contains licorice root extract, a natural anti-inflammatory agent that helps reduce itching and burning of the skin." They also note that it's free of fragrance and dyes, too.

CeraVe Moisturizing Cream

Editor's pick

\$18.39 ~~\$19.49~~ at Amazon
Now 6% off

\$18.89 at Target

\$19.99 at Ulta

What to Consider



“CeraVe is always a winner for my sensitive, acne-prone skin,” shares editorial assistant Erica Marrison. “I use this as my face moisturizer morning and night, and it’s perfect! Plus, given that the price point is low and the container is huge, it lasts me a *very* long time before I need to repurchase.”

Aveeno Eczema Therapy Itch Relief Balm

\$19.97 ~~\$26.58~~ at Amazon

Now 25% off

\$19.97 at Walmart

\$23.99 at Walgreens

What to Consider



Reviewers say this cream is thick in texture, but absorbs well into the driest and eczema-prone skin.

The Inkey List Bio-Active Ceramide Moisturizer

Editor's pick

\$20.00 ~~\$21.50~~ at Sephora

Now 7% off

\$21.50 at Kohl's

\$21.50 at The Inkey List

What to Consider



"I use this at night when my skin is feeling dry," says production coordinator [Camryn Privette](#). "I can immediately feel a difference. The brand really does its research on ingredients, so I feel great about putting this on."

Tower 28 SOS Recovery Cream

\$24.00 at Sephora

\$24.00 at Tower 28

\$24.00 at Credo

What to Consider



[One Shop TODAY contributor](#) says she's used this on her face and hands and instantly felt softer and smoother skin.

Tower 28 SOS Recovery Cream **Courtesy Jamie Sanders**

Tula Barrier Balance Ceramide Body Moisturizer



\$32.00 at Amazon

\$32.00 at Tula

\$32.00 at Ulta

What to Consider



"This product is so great! It's lightweight and cold to the touch," says social media editor [Kara Quill](#). "It's a little more oily than other body moisturizers that I've tried, but it made it less heavy and the formula easily absorbed into my skin."

Olehenriksen Après Skin Multi-Use Rescue Crème



\$48.00 at Ole Henriksen

\$48.00 at Sephora

\$48.00 at Ulta

What to Consider




"This cream is super hydrating and also contains key ingredients like niacinamide and glycerin," says associate editor [Allie Wise](#). She notes that it is thicker in texture, so it's better suited for very dry skin.

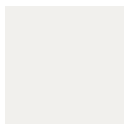
Meet our experts

- [**Dr. Helyn Alvarez, MD, FAAD**](#), is a board-certified dermatologist at Westlake Dermatology in Austin, Texas.
- [**Dr. Ellen Marmur, MD**](#), is a board-certified dermatologist in New York, New York and founder of [MMSkincare](#).

How we chose

The Shop TODAY editors and writers search the internet to find the best products and sales out there. We use our own personal experiences with products and brands to make shopping easier for our readers.

We selected the best ceramide products and peptide products based on insights and recommendations from board-certified dermatologists. We also include approved picks from Shop TODAY editors and staffers. Other products were sourced through verified shopper reviews. 



Shannon Garlin

Shannon Garlin is an Associate Editor for Shop TODAY.



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RAEL

EltaMD UV Skin SPF
Sunscreen

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