



EXPERTS

How Long It Really Takes To Repair A Damaged Skin Barrier

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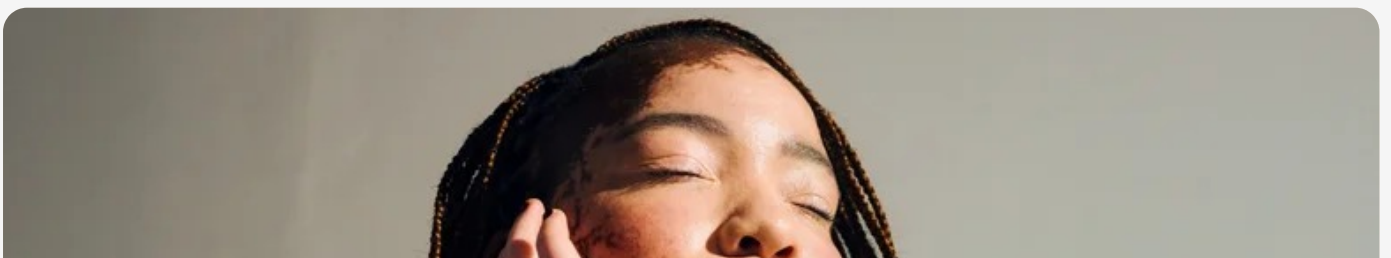
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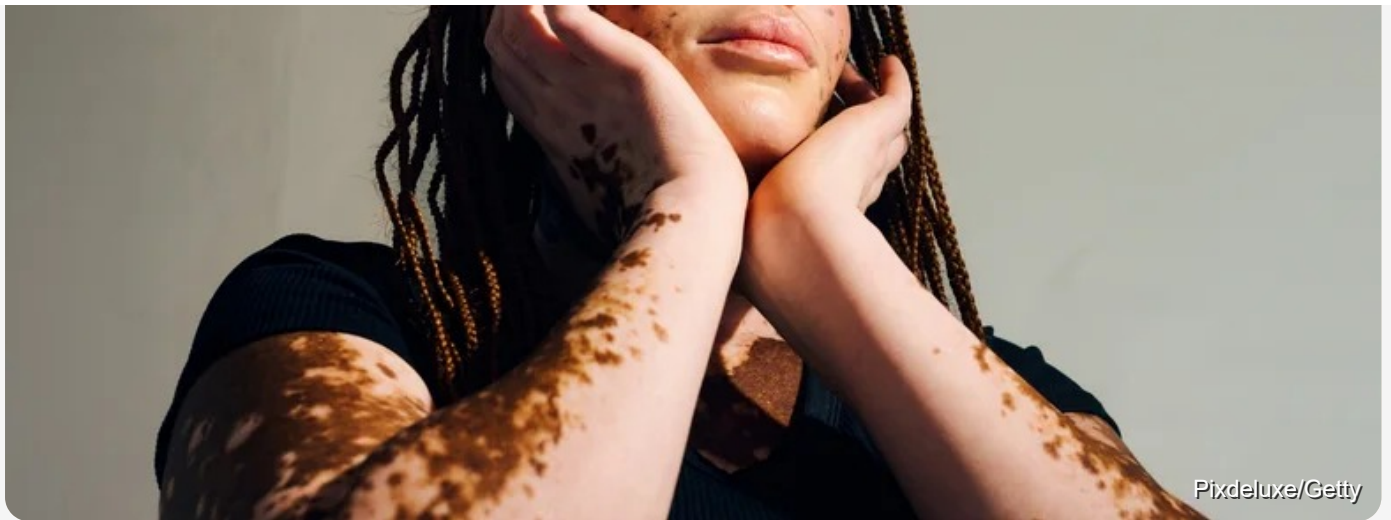
The health of your skin barrier is one of the most important factors when it comes to the outward appearance of your complexion. If you want glowy, hydrated skin, an intact and well-maintained skin barrier is key. Your skin barrier is the very outer layer of your skin (called the stratum corneum). It acts as a protective wall, locking in moisture while shielding your skin from environmental pollutants. That said, if something were to compromise your skin barrier, it would lead to major issues on both superficial and internal levels. There are resources out there for everything you need to know about a damaged skin barrier and how to treat it, but how long does it take to heal?

To get some answers, we spoke to Dr. Rachel Westbay, a board certified dermatologist at Marmur Medical. Dr. Westbay tells Glam exclusively that if your skin barrier is damaged, your skin will suddenly become much more reactive. If you experience dryness, flaking, tightness, redness, itching, burning or stinging even when using your tried-and-true skincare products, your skin barrier is likely damaged. "The skin can also feel rough or appear dull, and some people notice an increase in breakouts or inflammation. One clue I often give patients is that if your normal skincare routine suddenly 'hurts,' your barrier may be asking you to back off," Dr. Westbay explains. For minor irritation, it can take from several days to one or two weeks for your skin barrier to normalize. However, according to Dr. Westbay, more significant barrier disruption can take several weeks to repair. If you suspect that your skin barrier is damaged, don't fret — here's how to fix it. For minimalists, a skin barrier-repairing routine is a must.

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How can you repair your skin barrier?





It may seem daunting to have to "repair" your skin barrier, but Dr. Rachel Westbay has broken down exactly how to do so. The first step is easy enough: simplify your skincare routine. Pause on products that contain potentially irritating ingredients like retinoids, exfoliants, benzoyl peroxide, and even vitamin C. Instead, employ a bare minimum skincare routine that will still give results — per Dr. Westbay, restrict your products to an ultra-gentle cleanser, a hydrating moisturizer, and a sunscreen. "Look for ingredients such as glycerin, hyaluronic acid, squalane, ceramides, and other humectants or emollients that help replenish hydration and reduce water loss," Dr. Westbay exclusively tells Glam. "I also tell patients to avoid over-cleansing, very hot water, and constantly introducing new products. Your skin barrier is remarkably good at repairing itself when you stop repeatedly disrupting it."

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For a gentle cleanser, Dr. Westbay recommends the MMSkincare Luscious Moisturizing Cleanser. Alternative cleansers that can be used on sensitive skin include the Aveeno Calm + Restore Gentle Nourishing Oat Face Cleanser and Vanicream's Gentle Facial Cleanser for Sensitive Skin. Hydration is key for repairing your skin's barrier, so reach for moisturizers like the Avène Cicalfate+ Restorative Protective Cream, MMSkincare Rescue Face Neck Body Cream, and Korabeauticals Light Weight Gel Cream. Dr. Westbay recommends non-

irritating yet powerful sunscreen like [EltaMD's UV Clear Broad-Spectrum SPF 46](#) or the [Cetaphil Daily Face Moisturizer Sunscreen Lotion](#) to further protect your skin's barrier from harmful UV. "I always tell patients that your skin barrier is the foundation of everything else you are trying to accomplish, whether that's treating acne, pigmentation or signs of aging," Dr. Westbay says. "Sometimes the most effective skincare intervention is simply doing less for a little while and allowing your skin to recover."

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How we curated our skincare recommendations



Skincare is very personal. Everyone's skin needs something slightly different, so there is no truly universal product or line available. However, when recommending products to repair a skin barrier, we used a combination of factors: advice from Dr. Rachel Westbay, hundreds

of reviews and commentary from those with sensitive skin on message boards and brand websites, as well as this writer's personal experience with healing a problematic skin barrier. If you try a product from this article, always remember to spot test before fully applying anything to your face.

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