

**AOL**

# The best at-home Botox alternatives, according to dermatologists

**AOL**

CAMRYN RABIDEAU

June 18, 2025



Wrinkles happen to all of us eventually. No matter how diligently you take care of your skin, you'll slowly develop creases and lines as you get older, particularly in areas like your forehead, between your eyebrows, and around your eyes. While some people choose to embrace their aging skin, others prefer to minimize the appearance of wrinkles — often with the aid of Botox.

Botox is an injectable treatment that's considered the "gold standard" for wrinkle prevention and reduction, and it's widely used by dermatologists and aestheticians to combat common signs of aging in the face.

#### **Good Molecules Gentle Retinol Cream**

\$8 at Amazon

#### **CeraVe Skin Renewing Retinol Serum**

\$23 at Amazon

#### **The Ordinary Retinol 1% in Squalane**

\$13 at Amazon

#### **Paula's Choice Pro Retinaldehyde Dual-Retinoid Advanced Treatment**

\$18 at Amazon

#### **The Ordinary Argireline Solution 10%**

\$10 at Amazon

"Botox is a brand name for botulinum toxin type A, a purified neurotoxin that temporarily relaxes the muscles that cause dynamic wrinkles," explains Melanie Abeyta, aesthetic nurse practitioner and owner of Harmony Aesthetics Center in Los Angeles. "It works by blocking the signals from nerves to the muscles, so the targeted muscle doesn't contract. The result is that the overlying skin smooths out, softening the appearance of fine lines and preventing deeper creases from forming over time."

While Botox is often the most effective option for reducing wrinkles, it's not necessarily the right solution for everyone. For optimal results, you'll need to get Botox injections a few times each year, and the costs can add up quickly. Additionally, some people just don't like the idea of having the substance injected into their body.

If you're not sure that Botox is right for you — or just want to try a non-invasive treatment method first — there are skin care products that can provide similar results, helping to smooth out wrinkles and ward off signs of aging.

"No topical product can replicate the muscle-paralyzing effects of Botox since it works under the skin at the neuromuscular level," says Abeyta. "However, some ingredients can temporarily relax facial tension or improve the appearance of fine lines through hydration, skin smoothing, or collagen stimulation."

To help you put together a wrinkle-fighting plan, we spoke with several dermatologists and estheticians for expert insights on the best at-home Botox alternatives to add to your skin care routine. Here's what they recommend.

## **Retinoids**

Retinoids — including the popular retinol, but also retinaldehyde — are the top Botox alternative recommended by all our experts.

"Retinols are among the most well-known and effective anti-aging ingredients," recommends dermatologist Dr. Viktoryia Kazlosukaya, owner of Dermatology Circle in NYC. "They speed up skin cell turnover, which leads to brighter, smoother skin with improved texture and reduced pigmentation."

Retinol and retinaldehyde can be found in serum and cream form, and they're often a budget-friendly option to add to your skin care routine. These products can be irritating to the skin, so it's best to start out with a lower concentration and apply just once or twice a week. You can slowly increase the frequency of use as needed, and you'll begin to see results after a few weeks of consistent use.

### **Good Molecules Gentle Retinol Cream**

If you're just starting out with retinol, you'll want a product with a lower concentration of the ingredient, such as this night cream. It's formulated with 0.1% retinol, as well as bakuchiol, an antioxidant that offers similar benefits, and the cream is gentle enough for sensitive skin, making it a beginner-friendly pick.

\$8 at Amazon

\$8 at Ulta Beauty

### **CeraVe Skin Renewing Retinol Serum**

This is another popular retinol serum that also contains other anti-aging ingredients like ceramides and hyaluronic acid. The formula is gentle enough for those with sensitive skin, and reviewers say it has a "lightweight, milky texture" that absorbs quickly into the skin.

\$23 at Amazon

\$23 at Target

\$25 at Ulta Beauty

### **The Ordinary Retinol 1% in Squalane**

For a high-strength retinol serum, this product from The Ordinary is a top-rated choice. It has a 1% retinol formula that will help target fine lines, wrinkles, and uneven skin texture, and because you only need a few drops per day, the bottle should last for a while. This product is recommended for advanced users, though — if you're new to retinol, you'd be better off with the brand's Retinol 0.2% serum.

\$13 at Amazon

### **Paula's Choice Pro Retinaldehyde Dual-Retinoid Advanced Treatment**

Want to try out a retinaldehyde-based formula? They're not as popular as retinol, but this treatment from Paula's Choice (one of my personal go-to brands) includes both retinaldehyde and adapinoid, another retinoid. This formula is particularly good for acne-prone skin and can help smooth out rough skin texture.

\$18 at Amazon

## **Peptides**

Peptides, which are chains of amino acids, are another ingredient that comes highly recommended by skin care experts. In particular, a peptide called Argireline is a popular ingredient in anti-wrinkle products: "Argireline is often called 'Botox in a jar' because it may inhibit the neurotransmitter release, thus relaxing facial tension and providing a subtle smoothing of fine lines, especially around eyes and forehead," explains Abeyta. Dr. Kazlosukaya also notes that other peptides can "support various skin functions, including collagen production."

Peptides are available in a wide range of serums, and there are also peptide creams and moisturizers available. These ingredients are less likely to irritate the skin compared to retinoids, but it's still a good idea to introduce peptides to your routine slowly, especially if you're using other anti-aging products.

### **The Ordinary Argireline Solution 10%**

This Argireline serum is arguably the closest thing you'll get to an over-the-counter Botox alternative. The active ingredient helps relax facial tension, helping to reduce the appearance of wrinkles: "While still allowing facial expressions, it substantially reduces muscle movement, making my expressions softer rather than frozen," explains one happy reviewer.

\$10 at Amazon

\$10 at Ulta Beauty

\$10 at Nordstrom

### **Minimalist Multi Peptide Night Face Serum**

The main ingredient in this night serum is 7% Matrixyl, another popular anti-aging peptide. In addition to providing hydration, the formula is designed to promote skin rejuvenation and cell revitalization, and reviewers say it "does wonders on fine lines and deeper wrinkles."

\$13 at Amazon

### **Neutrogena Rapid Firming Peptide Contour Lift Face Cream**

Peptides are also commonly incorporated into moisturizers and face creams, and this formula from Neutrogena is designed to promote skin elasticity and firmness. The brand claims you'll see visible results in as little as two weeks, and reviewers absolutely rave about it: "This face cream makes my skin soft and smooth and makes any wrinkles on my 71-year-old skin much less noticeable," notes one buyer.

\$38 at Amazon

## **Hyaluronic acid**

Retinoids and peptides take several weeks to start working, and if you need a quick (temporary) fix, you may want to look for a product that contains hyaluronic acid: "Hyaluronic acid attracts water to the skin, which improves hydration and helps plump the skin," says Abeyta. "It also helps temporarily reduce the appearance of fine, surface-level wrinkles."

In a similar vein, any product that hydrates your skin can help minimize the appearance of wrinkles: "Dry, dehydrated skin looks more wrinkled than it is," Abeyta continues. "Drinking water and using humectants such as glycerin or hyaluronic acid will help improve the hydration in your skin, therefore improving skin tone and texture." Bottom line? Don't skip that moisturizer, and keep up your water intake!

### **L'Oreal Paris Revitalift 1.5% Pure Hyaluronic Acid Face Serum**

Touted as the top-selling serum in the world, this L'Oreal Paris formula certainly has a legion of fans — including some celebrities! Judi Dench has used this hyaluronic acid serum as part of her skin care routine before big photo shoots, as it provides a plumping effect that reduces the appearance of wrinkles in as little as one hour.

\$21 at Amazon

\$28 at Target

\$36 at Ulta Beauty

### **La Roche-Posay Hyalu B5 Pure Hyaluronic Acid Serum**

This is another widely popular hyaluronic acid serum that will help hydrate and plump your skin. While it's on the pricier side, it gets top marks from reviewers, who say it smooths and softens the skin: "My face has fewer small wrinkles, and in general, it looks much smoother and younger."

\$40 at Amazon

\$40 at Target

\$40 at Ulta Beauty

### **Paula's Choice Skin Recovery Replenishing Facial Moisturizer**

Hyaluronic acid is also incorporated into certain moisturizers, like this one from Paula's Choice. It's a great pick for anyone with dry skin, providing immediate hydration that lasts for hours, and it also contains peptides for additional wrinkle-reducing power.

\$39 at Amazon

## **Sunscreen**

Did you know that UV damage from the sun is the No. 1 cause of premature wrinkles? If you want to keep your skin looking youthful, it's absolutely essential to apply sunscreen every day.

"Using sunscreen on a daily basis is the best anti-aging topical treatment one can use," says dermatologist Dr. Gary Goldenberg of Goldenberg Dermatology in NYC. "[Ultraviolet light] not only damages the epidermis and causes skin cancer, it also thins the dermis and subcutaneous fat, making the skin look dull and gaunt."

While it may not minimize the look of existing wrinkles, daily sunscreen application is key in preventing new ones from forming.

### **EltaMD UV Clear Face Sunscreen**

Our pick for the best face sunscreen, this top-rated sunscreen comes highly recommended by dermatologists. It has a lightweight, non-irritating formula that works well on all skin types, and it offers SPF 46 broad-spectrum protection.

\$43 at Groupon

\$44 at Walmart

\$86 at Dermstore

### **Neutrogena Ultra Sheer Dry-Touch Sunscreen**

Sunscreen isn't just important for your face — you should be protecting any skin that will be exposed during the day, including your neck, arms, shoulders, and legs. This SPF 70 sunscreen is great for full-body application, as it dries quickly and won't leave you feeling sticky.

\$9 at Amazon

\$9 at Target

\$14 at CVS Pharmacy

## Non-invasive procedures

Even if you don't want to use injectables, there are other cosmetic procedures to reduce wrinkles that can be done at a medspa or dermatology clinic.

"Alongside the ingredients mentioned above, there are several non-invasive cosmetic procedures that can help with wrinkle reduction — many of these have minimal downtime and don't require healing," says Kazlosukaya. "My personal favorites include resurfacing lasers and Sofwave — an ultrasound-based device that targets wrinkles, stimulates collagen, and provides lifting and skin-tightening benefits, all in one treatment."

Chemical peels, microdermabrasion, and microneedling are a few other options that you may want to discuss with your dermatologist, as well.

Meet our experts

- Melanie Abeyta is an aesthetic nurse practitioner and owner of Harmony Aesthetics Center in Los Angeles.
- Dr. Viktoryia Kazlosukaya is a board-certified dermatologist and the owner of Dermatology Circle in NYC.
- Dr. Gary Goldenberg is a board-certified dermatologist and co-owner of Goldenberg Dermatology in NYC.

SOURCE: <https://www.aol.com/lifestyle/the-best-at-home-botox-alternatives-according-to-dermatologists-203301846.html>