

How To Use Hyaluronic Acid To Get Plumper, Juicier Skin

Experts weigh in on the benefits of the all-star ingredient.

By [Katie Mogg](#) Updated: Jul 10, 2025 1:04 PM EDT



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If you're like me, you're willing to jump at any opportunity to try a new skincare product. What kind of beauty editor would I be if I weren't, right?

But every now and then, I hear about an ingredient that makes me think, "This sounds great, but what exactly can it do for my skin?" Of course, there are tons of ingredients that fall under that umbrella—and very few that are actually proven to work—but one that you've likely seen on hundreds of skincare labels is hyaluronic acid.

The ingredient is the "it-girl" of skincare for so many reasons, chief among them because it's super hydrating and safe to use on multiple skin types with little to no negative side effects. "Everyone and their mother has used hyaluronic acid in some sort of capacity if you've bought anything new in skincare in the past 10 or 20 years," says Gary Goldenberg, MD, an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. "I think it's a very important ingredient for skin health."

Meet the experts: Gary Goldenberg, MD, is an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Mona Gohara, MD, is a board-certified dermatologist, Women's Health Advisory Board member, and associate clinical professor for the department of dermatology at Yale School of Medicine. Richard Parker is a cosmetic chemist and founder of RATIONALE.

Get this: The body naturally produces hyaluronic acid to keep the skin moisturized and help lubricate our joints and bones, says Mona Gohara, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and Women's Health Advisory Board member. "It's basically goo," adds Dr. Goldenberg. "If you think of collagen as the ropes that keep the skin together, think of hyaluronic acid as the stuff that surrounds the rope so they can be mobile and elastic."

Now that you've got the basics, here's everything else you need to know before adding hyaluronic acid to your skincare routine.

What are the benefits of hyaluronic acid?

Hyaluronic acid is what's known as a humectant, meaning it attracts and binds to water. In fact, just one gram of hyaluronic acid can retain as much as six liters of water, says Richard Parker, a cosmetic chemist and founder of RATIONALE. There are two ways that hyaluronic acid hydrates and moisturizes, Parker explains. "It either draws water up from the skin's deeper layers, which are always moist," he says, "or it can attract water from the atmosphere and bring it down into the skin."

ICYDK, there are several notable benefits to using the ingredient topically. Here's a quick breakdown:

Improve the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles: If this is high on your list of skincare concerns, you'll be happy to hear that fine lines and even some superficial wrinkles are usually caused by dryness in the skin's top layer, says Parker. That means the simple act of moisturizing with hyaluronic acid can temporarily fade those lines and quickly help you achieve a dewy and radiant look. However, this upside doesn't apply to wrinkles caused by repeated facial movements that form when muscle contractions fold the skin—like those on the forehead or around the eyes and mouth. "Hyaluronic acid is not going to be any help for those types of deeper lines and wrinkles," Parker explains.

Plump and firm skin: Ready for some science? The human body contains about 15 grams of hyaluronic acid, according to a study from the European Journal of Cell Biology. But as we age, our skin naturally produces less of it, which can make skin appear more dry, thin and saggy, Dr. Goldenberg says. Regularly applying topical hyaluronic acid can help replenish what's lost, but the exact benefit depends on the size of its molecules, which vary among cosmetic products, he adds. Larger hyaluronic acid molecules tend to sit on the outermost surface of the skin called the epidermis, where they help plump and hydrate the skin barrier. Meanwhile, some research suggests that smaller and lower-weight hyaluronic acid molecules can penetrate into a deeper layer of the skin called the dermis, Dr. Goldenberg says. To achieve comprehensive hydration, consider products with a blend of low and high molecular weights of hyaluronic acid. (Look out for phrases like "multi-molecular weight," and "multi-depth hydration" on product labels and descriptions.)

Heal wounds: This benefit might seem shocking, but some research suggests that hyaluronic acid may quicken the wound-healing process by absorbing water and nutrients to the wound site, says Dr.

Gohara. If you have acne scars you'd like to fade, for example, hyaluronic acid may help improve their appearance, Dr. Goldenberg explains.

Who should use hyaluronic acid?

If you're asking yourself whether to use hyaluronic acid, pretty much everyone can consider the answer an easy yes, Parker says. There are, however, specific subcategories of people who can really reap the benefits of this ingredient—such as women who are experiencing hormone level changes as they age, says Dr. Gohara. "In your 40s, estrogen starts to plummet around menopause and perimenopause, causing dry skin," she adds. To combat that dryness, Dr. Gohara recommends double moisturizing using a hyaluronic acid base, followed by a traditional moisturizer on top.

The superstar ingredient is also useful for those experiencing signs of aging due to sun damage, Dr. Gohara adds. Research suggests that by hydrating the skin, hyaluronic acid can help strengthen the skin barrier and make it more resilient to the harmful effects of exposure to the sun's ultraviolet radiation.

What are the side effects of using hyaluronic acid?

Since hyaluronic acid is already naturally produced by the body, using it in topical form (even when mixed with other products) is very unlikely to cause any negative side effects, says Dr. Gohara. "Anyone can become allergic to anything, but in general, hyaluronic acid is a very safe ingredient," Dr. Goldenberg adds. Those with acne, rosacea, eczema, or sensitive skin, however, may still want to check in with a dermatologist before adding the ingredient to their routine, Dr. Gohara says—just to be on the safe side.

Nevertheless, hyaluronic acid is very compatible with most skin types, Dr. Gohara says. Whether you're oily, dry, or acne-prone, hyaluronic acid's moisturizing and anti-aging effects can benefit practically anyone. "Plus, it's also plays nice in the sandbox with other ingredients," Dr. Gohara adds. So feel free to combine hyaluronic acid with other skincare staples such as vitamin C, retinol, niacinamide, vitamin E, and peptides. "One does not deactivate the other," Dr. Goldenberg says. And luckily for us, there's also no such thing as overdosing on hyaluronic acid, adds Parker, it just won't be as effective if you don't need it.

So, if you're not sure whether to splurge on hyaluronic acid but want to give it a try, just "don't buy the Costco-sized product right away," Dr. Goldenberg says. "Buy a small tube, and if it's not for you, you're not wasting a ton of money."

How to get the most benefits from hyaluronic acid

Even though hyaluronic acid is useful for most skin types, knowing your skin's specific needs can help you invest your money strategically, and maximize the benefits of this powerhouse ingredient. "If you've got dry skin, a cream's going to be better for you because it has more oil in it and it's going to seal moisture in," says Parker. "If you've got oily skin and you tend to break out a lot, you want to avoid oil, and that's where we'd recommend a serum."

Dr. Gohara, meanwhile, generally recommends using serums to apply hyaluronic acid to the skin since they're highly concentrated and easily layered under other products, she says.

What's the bottom line?

Hyaluronic acid is a low-risk, high-reward skincare ingredient that likely deserves a spot in your beauty routine. Whether you're dealing with dryness, dull skin, or signs of aging, its hydrating properties can help revive and replenish your complexion. And the best part? Hyaluronic acid is such a common ingredient in beauty products that you don't even have to break the bank to experience its effects, Dr. Goldenberg says. "It's one of the forgotten heroes of skincare," he adds. "It's so, so great."