

## The Best Bakuchiol Serums Smooth and Firm Like Retinol, Minus the Irritation

### Love It

Fragrance-free, transfer-proof, no pilling

### Leave It

Some users wish the results were faster-acting, though most report improvement after some 60 days

### Best Eye Cream: Haruharu Wonder Black Rice Bakuchiol Eye Cream



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HaruHaru Wonder

Black Rice Bakuchiol Eye Cream

[\\$13](#)

[AMAZON](#)

- **Why We Love It:** Crow's feet and [dark circles](#) are two reasons one might reach for a retinol eye cream, but a bakuchiol potion might be better suited for some. "Given the lower risk of irritation when compared to retinol, bakuchiol may be a more appropriate choice for people with sensitive skin, including those with rosacea and eczema, who desire the skin-care benefits of retinol but cannot tolerate it," says Amin. If that sounds like you, look no further than K-beauty brand HaruHaru Wonder's Black Rice eye cream powered by fermented black rice, bamboo shoot bark extract, and 5,000ppm of bakuchiol to gently smooth fine lines while awakening the eye area.
- **Key Ingredients:** Fermented black rice, bamboo shoot bark extract, bakuchiol, ginseng root extract
- **Bakuchiol Concentration:** 5,000ppm (0.5%)
- **Size:** 20mL / 0.67 fl oz

Love It	Leave It
Gentle enough for sensitive skin, smooth texture works well under makeup	Some users find the packaging, particularly the pump, difficult to use

**Best Plant-Based: Herbivore Moon Fruit 1% Bakuchiol + Peptides Retinol Alternative Serum**



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Herbivore

Moon Fruit 1% Bakuchiol + Peptides Retinol Alternative Serum

[\\$68](#)

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[\\$60](#)

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- **Why We Love It:** Dermatologist Dr. Divya Shokeen recommends Herbivore's serum—describing it as “a gentle, all-natural formula suitable for all skin types. It smooths fine lines and improves skin texture without causing irritation.” Plus, it’s plant-based and boasts a nourishing serum-texture that sinks into skin and pairs well with [face moisturizers](#) to follow.
- **Key Ingredients:** Bakuchiol, plant peptides, Schisandra berry extract, jojoba seed oil, glycerin
- **Bakuchiol Concentration:** 1%
- **Size:** 30 mL / 1 fl oz

Love It	Leave It
Suitable for all skin types, fast-absorbing, gentle	Users are divided over the smell; some find it pleasant, while others describe it as odd

## Everything You Need to Know

What is bakuchiol?

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“Bakuchiol is a plant-derived ingredient from the leaves and seeds of *Psoralea corylifolia* plant (AKA babchi),” says Amin. “This herb is native to India and has been used for centuries in traditional Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine.”

What is the best form of bakuchiol?

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Amin explains that texture does not interfere with bakuchiol's efficacy meaning that it can be integrated as a serum or cream to your liking. "A serum formulation offers a more lightweight method of delivery of bakuchiol," she says, while "a cream or oil would offer a more hydrating form of delivery of the bakuchiol."

## Bakuchiol Versus Retinol: What's better?

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"The majority of our data comes from retinol, and even more specifically, [tretinoin](#), which is a synthetic form of retinol available by prescription only," says [Tanya Kormeili](#), MD, a board-certified dermatologist in Santa Monica. "Therefore, based on data, we consider retinol the gold standard for boosting collagen and elastin."

Dr. Kelly Tufman elaborates, "There are decades of data showing that retinol reduces wrinkles, smooths texture, fades hyperpigmentation and photoaging, and treats acne and clogged pores." However, the vitamin A derivative can also cause redness, peeling, and barrier disruption—especially as the skin becomes accustomed to it.

According to Kelly Tufman, bakuchiol is best for:

- Those with sensitive, reactive, or rosacea-prone skin that flares with even low-strength retinoids.
- People with early signs of aging who want a gentler option.
- "Bakuchiol is also frequently used in [pregnancy skin-care routines](#) because it isn't a vitamin A derivative," she says. "But, I always tell people to clear new actives with their OB-GYN or dermatologist."

## Is it okay to use bakuchiol and retinol together?

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"Retinol and bakuchiol *can* be combined, but it's generally not needed," Dr. Kelly Tufman says. "More is not automatically better here." For those

seeking “maximum anti-aging power” or a potent [acne treatment](#), she recommends retinol. On the other hand, “If you have more sensitive skin or skin that reacts to almost everything, bakuchiol is often the better choice,” she says. “You’ll avoid irritation while getting similar benefits.”

Dr. Goldenberg suggests alternating the two ingredients. “Especially in the winter, I recommend using retinol two to three times per week and bakuchiol on other days of the week,” he says.

What percentage of bakuchiol is the most effective?

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According to Amin, 0.5-2% of bakuchiol is the most effective percentage. Beginners or those with skin sensitivities might look for a lower percentage, whereas experienced users or those with deep wrinkles may find a higher percentage more appropriate.

Is bakuchiol a “retinol alternative”?

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Bakuchiol is often dubbed a natural retinol-alternative but what does that actually mean? Amin explains that this comparison highlights that the two ingredients work similarly, but they are actually quite different. “Retinol, a derivative of vitamin A, is known to stimulate collagen production, prevent fine lines and wrinkles, and increase skin elasticity,” she explains. “However, retinol is commonly associated with side effects of irritation and dryness, most notably for individuals with dry skin. [Recent research](#) supports the notion that bakuchiol demonstrates these same benefits with less of a risk of irritation.” Amin continues that future research is needed to determine the efficacy of bakuchiol in comparison to prescription retinoids.

Another reason to consider bakuchiol versus retinol is that the former is stable in sunlight and does not result in increased sun sensitivity—though Amin bids that sunscreen wear is still recommended.

## How long does it take to see the results of bakuchiol?

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“Just like most products—it takes a few months to see improvement,” says Shokeen. “You can expect to see visible improvements in 4-12 weeks of consistent use.” She continues that results can be longer compared to retinol.

## Who should use bakuchiol?

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According to Shokeen, the following people should use bakuchiol:

- Individuals with sensitive skin who can’t tolerate retinol.
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women (always consult with a healthcare provider).
- People looking for a natural alternative to retinol.
- Those with issues concerning aging, dark spots, or uneven skin texture.

## What are the downsides of bakuchiol?

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Though the retinol alternative shows promise, its claims aren’t rooted in a sea of research. “There are very limited studies on bakuchiol,” says [Howard Sobel, MD](#), a board-certified cosmetic dermatologic surgeon at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York. “Although [claims] state that bakuchiol can help increase cell turnover and renewal, there is a risk of sensitivity, redness, dryness, or stinging of the skin. I recommend introducing the skin to it slowly.”

## What should you not pair with bakuchiol?

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To avoid irritating the skin, “I would not pair bakuchiol with a vitamin A derivative such as any retinol product,” says Dr. Sobel. The idea is that piling on too many ingredients that stimulate cell turnover can cause the cells to turn over a little *too* quickly, which could result in everything from redness to dryness and flakiness.

## How We Tested

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When we test and review a product, we take a holistic approach to deliver well-rounded product recommendations. First, we lean on *Vogue*'s vast network of experts—from board-certified dermatologists to celebrity estheticians—to gain professional acumen on the industry's standout products, ones these specialists would actually use on their clients. We pair their expertise with our editorial best practices to curate the thoughtful edits you read on our site.

As it relates to bakuchiol serums, we selected the best based on the following characteristics: ingredients, texture, packaging, and the skin-care concerns they address. To do this, we paired our own personal tests of each formula with expert guidance and reviewer insights to determine which we would recommend to you.

## Meet The Experts

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- [Mina Amin](#), MD, is a Los Angeles-based dermatologist at California Dermatology Specialists.
- [Divya Shokeen](#), MD, is a California-based, board-certified dermatologist at the Ocean Skin and Vein Institute.
- [Howard Sobel](#), MD, is a board-certified cosmetic dermatologic surgeon at Lenox Hill Hospital.

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