

Can Estrogen Cream Really Improve Wrinkles and Dryness? Here's What Dermatologists Say

Fact checked by Nick Blackmer



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- Experts warn that long-term clinical trials on the safety and efficacy of estrogen creams are limited.
- Using estrogen creams may be effective during perimenopause and postmenopause.
- Users of these anti-aging creams have reported less skin dullness and atrophy.

Estrogen creams may boost collagen and hydration to improve wrinkles and dryness. However, more studies are needed to confirm these benefits.

What Exactly Are Estrogen Creams?

Estrogen creams have been used as hormone replacement therapy to help relieve menopause symptoms. However, topical estrogen creams have emerged in skincare, marketed as a solution for signs of aging.

Positive online reviews might make estrogen cream look like an easy choice for those approaching or undergoing menopause. However, experts caution that results are not guaranteed.

There's some evidence that estrogen creams could be beneficial for skin health, but this research is in its early stages.

"Long-term clinical trials on safety and efficacy are limited," [Kristina Collins, MD](#), a board-certified dermatologist at Austin Skin, told *Health*. "And most research focuses on prescription estrogen, rather than over-the-counter [options]."

How Do Estrogen Creams Work?

There are two types of estrogen creams for skin: one for vaginal use and newer blends for anti-aging.

Vaginal Creams

Vaginal creams are typically prescribed to treat [menopause symptoms](#) like hot flashes, vaginal dryness, itching, and burning.

They usually contain estradiol as the active form of [estrogen](#). Sometimes, they may include other types of estrogens as well, said [Brendan Camp, MD](#), board-certified dermatologist at MDCS Dermatology in New York.

Anti-Aging Creams

Estrogen creams marketed specifically for anti-aging, on the other hand, have different formulations. According to Dr. Collins, they may use estrogen or estrogen-like compounds to address skin aging.

"They often contain estradiol, estriol, or plant-based phytoestrogens like genistein (from soy) or [resveratrol](#) (from grapes and berries)," said Dr. Collins. "These ingredients aim to restore some of estrogen's lost benefits on the skin, such as boosting collagen production, improving hydration, and enhancing elasticity."

The hormone content of these creams is weaker than what you would find in a vaginal cream, said [Marianna Blyumin-Karasik, MD](#), a board-certified dermatologist and co-founder of Precision Skin and Body Institute in Florida.

How Do They Compare?

The vaginal estrogen a doctor might prescribe as [hormone replacement therapy](#) is potent enough to reach your bloodstream. Anti-aging estrogen creams are less concentrated, designed primarily for skin effects.

The two products are different, but "prescription vaginal estrogen creams are used off-label to address skin concerns associated with menopause," Dr. Camp told *Health*.

Is Anti-Aging Cream Right for Your Skin?

Anti-aging estrogen creams are largely marketed toward [perimenopausal](#) and postmenopausal people. They are most likely to have hormone-related changes to their skin during this stage of life.

"As we go through perimenopause, our estrogen level in skin declines and that increases skin dryness, impairs skin barrier and wound healing, and decreases firming and plumping molecules such as collagen, elastin, and [hyaluronic acid](#)," Dr. Blyumin-Karasik told *Health*.

Replacing lost estrogen could curtail some of these effects.

Side Effects

Be careful with any product that disrupts the body's natural hormonal balance. There's a possibility of some side effects.

Applying estrogen creams to your skin could result in some undesirable hormonal changes. "Even though absorption is lower than oral estrogen, there is a potential for systemic effects, such as breast tenderness or changes in hormone-sensitive tissues," said Dr. Collins.

Possible Risks

More research is needed to determine whether estrogen skincare creams are safe for certain groups.

Younger people with normal estrogen levels may avoid these anti-aging creams, as well as those with a history of hormone-sensitive conditions, such as breast or [uterine cancer](#), said Dr. Collins.

According to Dr. Collins, it's also best to avoid estrogen-based products if you have a blood-clotting disorder.

Are They Actually Effective?

Vaginal estrogen creams have a long history of effectiveness when it comes to treating women's health issues, such as [vaginal dryness](#) and painful sex. It's likely too soon to say the same about anti-aging estrogen creams.

These skin supplements are often poorly regulated and "vary widely in potency and formulation, making their efficacy and safety less predictable," said Dr. Collins.

There are some promising studies out there on estrogen creams for skincare, though many are dated and small.

Effects on Skin

A 2001 study revealed that applying estrogen to the face increased hyaluronic acid and other healthy, hydrating acids in the skin. A 2003 study of 65 people found that an estradiol cream outperformed a [glycolic acid](#) cream at increasing skin thickness in the outer skin layer.

A small 2018 study found that when estrogen-deficient women used a "cosmeceutical" with estrogen, they had less skin dryness, dullness, and atrophy than those in a control group.

Overall, Dr. Blyumin-Karasik called the research results "moderate and optimistic."

Estrogen creams still may not be a dermatologist's first line of defense for treating signs of skin aging. Other products—both over-the-counter and prescription—have a better, longer history of confirmed results.

"Early studies suggest that estrogen creams may improve age-related skin changes," said Dr. Camp. "But until there is more evidence, it is recommended to use products and ingredients with a proven track record of efficacy, such as [retinols](#), alpha and beta-hydroxy acids, antioxidants like vitamin C, and sunscreen."

Look for a product that's been third-party tested for quality and purity. As with any supplement, be sure to talk to a doctor before you start using one.

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