

MORE THAN A PRETTY FACE

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FOR: RETINOIDS

It's hard to argue with the science behind retinoids, says Miami dermatologist Dr. Leslie Baumann. "They are prescription drugs. For FDA approval, drug companies have to do scientific studies that absolutely prove retinoids get rid of wrinkles. It is the only thing on the market that has such concrete evidence." (Over-the-counter products with the vitamin A derivative retinol are similar but less powerful, and don't require FDA approval or undergo the same stringent tests.) Dermatologists balk at the idea that retinoids thin the skin because, as New York City derm Dr. Eric Schweiger argues, retinoids actually increase the thickness of the dermis—the deep layer of skin where wrinkles form. Since patients have to build up a tolerance to retinoids over several weeks before they can use them daily—and slathering on more than the recommended pea-sized amount results in a guaranteed flake-fest—using them too often or applying too >>



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—Dr. Leslie Baumann



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AGAINST: RETINOIDS

Most skin gurus who dislike retinoids are not dermatologists and see skin research in a different light. According to New York City facial plastic surgeon Dr. Michelle Yagoda, "The key is looking at the retinol studies and understanding how much collagen can really be built," she says. "It doesn't matter if it gives you 10 percent less of a wrinkle—that's so microscopic, our eyes can't distinguish it." Says Yagoda, retinoids are easy to prescribe, so patients are rarely offered an alternative. (In her experience, glycolic acids are just as effective and better-tolerated.) While most experts agree that retinoids do produce quick results, many claim they might not be worth it. "Sure, your discolorations and lines might be getting a little better," says Simon Erani, lead researcher for the skincare company Somme Institute, "but you're not noticing how your skin looks papery and thin." Erani believes any inflammation (detected in his subsurface skin photos >>