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The 6 Best Ingredients to Tighten Your Skin

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It is *truly* a privilege to get older, but with age comes things like achy joints, wrinkles, and — you guessed it — a reduction of the skin elasticity we tend to take for granted in our youth. "Reduced tightness in the skin is caused by the loss of collagen, which diminishes over time," explained Dr. Heather Woolery-Lloyd, a board-certified dermatologist based in Miami. "People usually start to complain about this in the 40s, but this can be accelerated by sun exposure, smoking or exposure to smoke, environmental stressors, and significant weight fluctuations."

Outside of wearing sunscreen and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, there are over-the-counter ingredients you can use that help firm, tone, and tighten your skin. We've harnessed the expertise of three skin experts to dish on the best of the best.

#1: Retinol



Retinol (vitamin A) is an over-the-counter retinoid that can be helpful in smoothing skin texture and firming the skin. "One way retinoids work is by inhibiting 'matrix metalloproteinases,' which are the enzymes that break down collagen in the skin," Dr. Woolery-Lloyd explained.

"Prescription products with retinoids like tretinoin and tazarotene are helpful. Over-the-counter products with retinol — such as the Specific Beauty Intensive Skin Brightening Serum (\$50) — may also be helpful."

For a splurgy but highly effective option, we also recommend the new Joanna Vargas Super Nova Serum (\$285), an all-natural retinol serum that celebs swear by.

#2: Collagen and Collagen-Boosting Peptides



Loss of elasticity is directly tied to a loss of collagen, so it makes sense that you'd want to incorporate this ingredient into your regimen if firmer skin is your objective. "Peptides are short chains of amino acids and the building blocks of proteins. Most people know collagen, the most popular," explained [Dr. Michelle Yagoda](#), a facial plastic surgeon based in NYC.

We recommend the new HydroPeptide Nimni Cream (\$110), a collagen-boosting cream you apply at night to help improve elasticity while you sleep. Another great option is Algenist Genius Liquid Collagen (\$115), which contains collagen amino acids to bolster the skin's matrix, microalgae to hydrate and nourish, and patented aluronic acid.

#3: Caffeine



For a quick boost of firmness, try a product that contains caffeine. This ingredient has long been used in skincare products for that purpose, as it stimulates blood flow to the area where it's applied, which in turn boosts circulation. Though it's primarily used for a pick-me-up — especially in eye creams — it may also help boost collagen production in the long run.

Try Sunday Riley Auto Correct Brightening and Depuffing Eye Contour Cream (\$65) or 100 Percent Pure Coffee Bean Caffeine Eye Cream (\$15).

#4: Hyaluronic Acid



"In addition to collagen and collagen-boosting peptides, I like hyaluronic acid, which draws moisture from the air and binds 1,000 times its weight at the cellular level, plumping up and

tightening the skin," said David Pollock, a beauty chemist who's developed products for brands like Lancome and SkinCeuticals.

He noted that not all hyaluronic acids are equal, though, and that finding a top-tier product is imperative. "A number of brands claim a low molecular weight hyaluronic acid. Typically, that is what we call under one million daltons," he said. "This weight forms a film and hydrates the skin from the outer layer. I prefer a multimolecular hyaluronic acid system, in which different molecule sizes are combined — going as low as the pharmaceutical grade below 10k daltons — so that it can be absorbed deeply within the lower layers of the skin."

Try NIOD's Multi Molecular Hyaluronic Complex (\$48).

#5: Alpha Hydroxy Acids (AHAs)



In general, alpha hydroxy acids do a fantastic job of resurfacing the skin to improve texture, brighten, and firm and plump. There are lots of options out there, and different formulations serve different skincare needs. Our experts said to seek products formulated specifically to tighten the skin, such as Estée Lauder Perfectionist Pro Rapid Firm + Lift Treatment With Acetyl Hexapeptide-8 (\$108).

#6: Polyglutamic Acid (PGA)



"Another up-and-coming ingredient is PGA (polyglutamic acid), which is naturally found in the skin and actually holds 10 times more moisture than hyaluronic acid," Pollock said. "You will see this ingredient appearing in more and more dermatological-type products to help hydrate and firm the skin."

Try Amore Pacific SPF30 Future Response Age Defense Crème (\$195), which contains PGA along with green tea and pine mushroom.