



EVERYTHING YOU  
NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

# *FACIAL SERUMS*

THERE'S A SERUM FOR ALMOST ANY SKIN CONCERN. BUT WHICH ONE IS RIGHT FOR YOU? WE DECODE THIS GROWING SECTION OF THE BEAUTY AISLE TO HELP YOU MAKE THE BEST CHOICE.

L'Oréal  
Paris  
Revitalift  
Vitamin C  
Serum



**W**hen the first facial serum arrived on the scene in 1982, it was more than just a new type of product – it was a completely different approach to skincare that harnessed the latest scientific innovations to deliver superior results. Created by Estée Lauder, the serum’s lightweight and silky texture was in stark contrast to the heavy creams and moisturisers of the time, and it relied on its thin consistency to deliver potent ingredients to the skin. Fast-forward 40-plus years and this groundbreaking product has set the blueprint for facial serums everywhere.

Even better, it’s a blueprint that gets results. As Sydney dermatologist Dr Li-Chuen Wong says: “Everybody can benefit from a serum – everyone.” If you’re unsure about what serums do, or how to choose one that will work with your skin, here’s all you need to know about this skincare essential.

### WHAT IS A SERUM?

A serum is a lightweight product that’s applied to the skin immediately after cleansing. It generally has a watery or gel-like texture but don’t be fooled by the feel – these are treatment products that use ingredients like vitamin C or hyaluronic acid to pack a serious punch.

“A serum contains a higher concentration of the active ingredient,” explains Dr Wong. “It works by enhancing the hydrating properties of a



Garnier SkinActive Hyaluronic Aloe Replumping Serum

moisturiser and it also allows for better skin penetration because it’s a lighter product.”

### WHAT’S THE BEST WAY TO APPLY SERUM?

As serums are so potent, a small amount can go a long way. “It’s not like a moisturiser, you don’t want to use half a bottle within a week,” says Dr Wong.

Instead, she recommends using a pea-sized amount – usually one or two pumps or, if the bottle has a dropper, it’s one full pipette. Dot the product on your forehead, nose, chin and each cheek, then press it into the skin with your fingertips.

### HOW OFTEN SHOULD I APPLY MY SERUM?

Depending on the active ingredient, a serum can be used up to twice a day. For example, if

your serum is primarily designed to hydrate or soothe skin, it will likely contain hyaluronic acid or niacinamide, gentle ingredients that are unlikely to cause a reaction. These hydrating serums can be used morning and night, says skin expert Dr Yalda Jamali.

However, a serum containing resurfacing retinol or exfoliating AHAs (alpha-hydroxy acids) should only be used at night, as they can cause irritation and make skin more sensitive to the sun (avoid retinol products completely if you’re pregnant or breastfeeding).

“Start by using it in the evening, two or three times a week, to see how your skin reacts to it,” advises Dr Jamali. “You can always bump it up to every night if your skin is tolerating it nicely, or drop down to once a week if your skin needs time to get used to it.” >



Nivea  
Cellular  
Replumping  
Hyaluronic  
Serum

### HOW DO I ADD A SERUM TO MY SKINCARE ROUTINE?

“All skincare regimens should be about layering,” says Dr Wong. “Cleanse and tone your face, then use the serum, followed by a moisturiser. The moisturiser will then lock in the benefits of the serum.” In the morning, follow with a facial sunscreen.

It’s also possible to layer multiple serums, if you really want to step up the benefits. Dr Wong suggests applying a niacinamide (vitamin B) serum first, in both the morning and evening, followed by a vitamin C serum in the AM and a retinol option in the PM. But don’t go overboard: layering too many different products can leave your skin feeling sticky and the product may pill.

### CAN I JUST USE SERUM INSTEAD OF MOISTURISER?

The experts agree that while serum is important, it’s only one

step in a good skincare routine and it shouldn’t be a replacement for your moisturiser.

“Moisturisers are still the number-one product recommended for moisturising the skin because they contain ingredients like shea butter, glycerin and others that make them soothing,” says Dr Jamali.

For people with oily or acne-prone skin, using a hyaluronic acid serum can be an excellent way to boost hydration without leaving a greasy residue, says Dr Wong. Then, follow it up with a lightweight moisturising lotion.

### DO YOU USE A SERUM ONLY ON THE FACE?

Not at all! Serum can be used on almost any patch of skin. Dr Jamali recommends extending your serum application down your neck and across the décolletage, where skin is thin and susceptible to sun damage. “These are areas

that we often neglect and then it shows in the signs of ageing,” she notes. “You can even use your serum on the back of your hands in the evening.”

### HOW LONG BEFORE I SEE RESULTS?

While serums are typically potent, the benefits can take a little while to be revealed. “Skin regenerates roughly every 40 days, so you would hope to see some good effects after six weeks,” says Dr Wong. “But you really have to hang in there for three months to see the benefits.”


“You would hope to see some good effects [from your serum] after six weeks of use.”

Dr Li-Chuen Wong

### ARE THERE ANY SERUMS THAT SHOULDN'T BE USED TOGETHER?

While layering some serums is a great way to boost the benefits, other combinations can backfire. For example, retinol and AHAs both work to resurface the skin, and can cause irritation if they’re used too close together. If you’re keen to use both, try applying them on alternate evenings.

Dr Jamali notes that vitamin C can lose some of its effectiveness if it’s layered with too many other active ingredients, so it can often work better when used in isolation. She also suggests introducing one new serum to your regimen at a time. “So if your skin doesn’t like it and becomes irritated, you’ll know which one is causing it.” >



## WHICH SERUM SHOULD I USE?

The right serum is one that suits your skin, is formulated with ingredients that address your complexion concerns, and has a nice texture and feel so you enjoy using it, says Dr Wong. "It doesn't have to be expensive," she adds.

"Price has nothing to do with efficacy - that comes from the active ingredient." Here's her guide to some of the top options.

Active ingredient	<i>NIACINAMIDE (VITAMIN B)</i>	<i>VITAMIN C</i>	<i>RETINOL</i>	<i>HYALURONIC ACID</i>
<b>Who should use it?</b>	Everyone - niacinamide is a great all-rounder.	If your skin needs a glow-up, vitamin C is the go-to for radiance.	Retinol addresses visible signs of ageing and can be used from the age of 20 to promote even, healthy-looking skin. It should be avoided if you're pregnant or breastfeeding.	Any skin types that need extra hydration, including oily and acne-prone complexions.
<b>What are the benefits?</b>	With its anti-inflammatory properties, it soothes and strengthens the skin barrier.	This brightens and evens out the skin tone, and visibly diminishes dark spots.	Resurfaces and evens out the complexion. Over time, it also promotes the formation of collagen and elastin.	Adds intense hydration in a lightweight formula that doesn't feel greasy.
<b>How often should I apply it?</b>	Twice a day, in the morning and evening.	In the morning - the antioxidant benefits help ward off environmental stressors.	Only in the evening - retinol can make skin more sun sensitive.	Twice daily on freshly cleansed and slightly damp skin. >

### Skin-brightening serums

**BEST FOR...**

Getting a glow and visibly evening out skin tone.



L'Oréal Paris Revitalift Vitamin C Serum



Garnier SkinActive Vitamin C Brightening Serum



Bondi Sands Gold'n Hour Brightening Vitamin C Serum.

### Mature skin serums

**BEST FOR...**

Helping skin look plumped up and rejuvenated.



Neutrogena Bright Boost Illuminating Serum



L'Oréal Paris Revitalift Hyaluronic Acid Serum



Olay Regenerist Retinol24 Night Serum.

### Hydrating serums

**BEST FOR...**

Adding a dewy and moisturised look and feel to skin.




Nivea Cellular Replumping Hyaluronic Serum



Garnier SkinActive Hyaluronic Aloe Replumping Serum



Olay Luminous Niacinamide + Hyaluronic Super Serum. 

\*Retinol and other forms of vitamin A should not be used while pregnant or breastfeeding.