

Using Tretinoin

Tretinoin is an FDA approved topical retinoid used to treat acne as well as photo damage associated with chronic sun exposure. Acne is associated with open and closed comedones which are reduced with the use of tretinoin. Photo damage results in wrinkling and sunspots (lentigenes or liver spots) which can be improved with the regular use of tretinoin.

There are many brand names for tretinoin including Retin-A, Atralin, Tretin-X and others. It comes in many vehicles and strengths including gels, creams, and emollient creams. The most commonly used strength is 0.05% although strengths vary from 0.02% to 0.1%. Gels and creams are better for the younger, acne prone skin where the emollient creams are better for the older, dryer skin.

Side effects include: redness, dryness, and irritation. These usually improve with continued use. To minimize these side effects it is important you follow instructions and follow these tips for success.

How to Apply:

Tretinoin is applied only once a day. More often does not improve results but only increases side effects. Ideally, it is applied at bedtime.

1. Wash face thoroughly with a mild soap or a gentle alcohol-free non-soap cleanser such as Neutrogena Fresh Foaming Wash, Cetaphil cleanser, or CeraVe cleanser. Pat skin dry and wait for skin to thoroughly dry, about 5-15 minutes.
2. Squeeze a pea-size amount of tretinoin onto your palm or fingertip.
3. Dab the amount on your forehead, cheeks, chin, and nose to distribute. Rub these in to spread the product over the face. Smooth into the skin until it is completely absorbed.
4. You may apply a moisturizer over this if desired.

Tips for Success:

1. Tretinoin can make your skin more sensitive to the sun, so every day wear a daily facial moisturizer of at least SPF 15.
2. The tingling you feel when applying tretinoin is normal. This will improve with time.
3. Using more than a pea-size amount will only cause more irritation and not improve results.
4. Avoid using medicated, abrasive (scrubs), or alcohol-containing products on your face.
5. Avoid depilatories, waxing, or bleaching facial hair unless you have been off the tretinoin for at least one week to avoid too much irritation.
6. It will take 2-3 months before you will see results. BE PATIENT!