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# We Asked Dermatologists Which Retinol Product They Recommend to Clients With Sensitive Skin—They Gave Us 9

Let the medical professionals help.

By [Mina Hochberg](#) | Published on September 28, 2025 02:00AM EDT



Credit: Real Simple

When it comes to anti-aging skin care, shoppers and experts alike [swear by retinol](#). The vitamin A derivative is beloved by many for helping to [hydrate skin](#), reduce the appearance of wrinkles, and restore glow. [Benefits](#), though, retinol can sometimes have side effects like

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which retinol products they'd suggest for people with reactive skin like mine. Below are some picks they recommend if you're looking for something that won't wreak havoc on your skin.

## Best Retinol Products for Sensitive Skin

- [CeraVe Skin-Renewing Retinol Serum](#), \$19 (was \$25)
- [La Roche-Posay Retinol B3 Serum](#), \$35 (was \$45)
- [Kiehl's Retinol Skin-Renewing Daily Microdose Serum](#), \$55 (was \$65)
- [First Aid Beauty .3% Retinol Complex Serum](#), \$35 (was \$48)
- [The Ordinary Retinol .2%](#), \$8
- [SkinMedica Retinol .25 Complex](#), \$64
- [Neutrogena Rapid Wrinkle Repair Retinol Oil](#), \$22 (was \$41)
- [Versed Press Restart Gentle Retinol Serum](#), \$20
- [A313 Cream With Retinyl Palmitate](#), \$46

### CeraVe Skin-Renewing Retinol Serum

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Credit: Amazon

\$25  
**\$19 at Amazon**

Board-certified dermatologist [Ryan Turner](#) recommends [this popular serum](#) because its mix of restorative ingredients can help offset some of retinol's harsher side effects. "It contains an encapsulated retinol (slower release), plus ceramides, hyaluronic acid, and niacinamide, which help support and repair the skin barrier, counteracting the effects of retinols," shared Dr. Turner. Shoppers clearly agree, since the serum has earned nearly [20,000 five-star ratings](#) on Amazon.

**La Roche-Posay Retinol B3 Serum**

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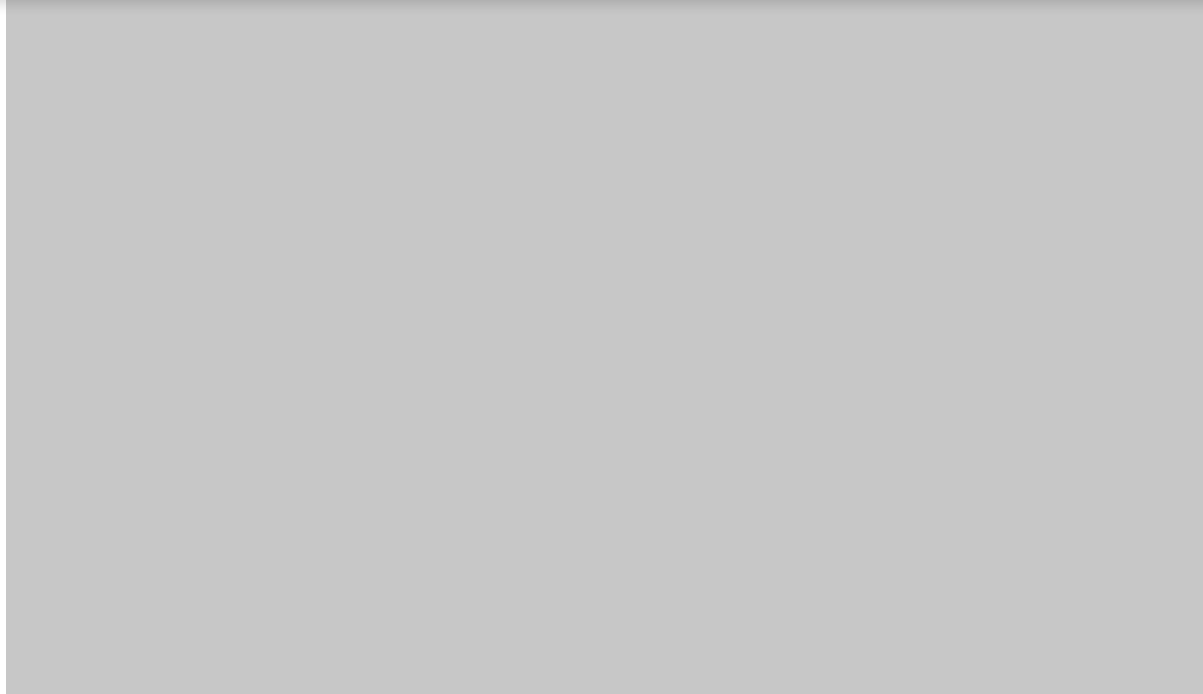
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Credit: Amazon

~~\$45~~  
**\$35 at Amazon**

Skin irritation is one of the more common side effects of retinol, so board-certified dermatologist [Kristel Polder](#) recommends [this serum's](#) soothing ingredients to counteract irritation. “This serum contains niacinamide (vitamin B3), which has been shown to calm the skin and reduce irritation and redness,” she said. This serum was also recommended to me by other dermatologists—so it has the stamp of approval from multiple docs.

**Kiehl's Retinol Skin-Renewing Daily Microdose Serum****SKIP TO CONTENT**

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Credit: Amazon

\$65  
**\$55 at Amazon**

Board-certified dermatologist [Jessie Cheung](#) is a fan of [this serum](#) because the microdose formula “delivers retinol in a slow and steady dose to help minimize irritation.” Meanwhile, ceramides help moisturize skin and peptides boost collagen production, resulting in a sought-after glow. “This product does not inflame your skin, and it is excellent for sensitive skin,” wrote one [five-star shopper](#).

**First Aid Beauty .3% Retinol Complex Serum****SKIP TO CONTENT**

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Credit: Amazon

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When in doubt, go with a low retinol strength like [this pick](#) from Dr. Cheung. “This serum is designed specifically for sensitive skin with a low concentration of retinol,” the doctor shared, also noting to take it easy when you begin any retinol treatment. “Start slow with your retinol product,” she shared. “Even just once or twice a week, as it can take a few days to see irritation develop.”

**The Ordinary Retinol .2%****SKIP TO CONTENT**

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Dr. Turner suggests beginning with low-strength retinol, then gradually increasing strength depending on how your skin reacts—which makes [this serum](#) perfect. “The Ordinary offers incremental strengths, so sensitive skin types can start at the lowest concentration and step up as the use is tolerated,” he shared, adding that the squalene ingredient also hydrates your skin and counteracts dryness that can occur from retinol.

**SkinMedica Retinol .25 Complex****SKIP TO CONTENT**

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Credit: Amazon

**\$64 at Amazon**

[This retinol serum](#) has an encapsulated formula, which means the retinol takes a longer time to penetrate the skin. This reduces irritation, which is one reason board-certified dermatologist [Debbie Palmer](#) recommends the serum to patients with sensitive skin. “I start patients on the 0.25 strength and build them up to the 0.5 and 1.0 strength as tolerated,” she shared, recommending a pea-size amount for two nights per week to start. If you have extra-sensitive skin, you can apply a [plain moisturizer](#) over the retinol to minimize drying.

**Neutrogena Rapid Wrinkle Repair Retinol Oil****SKIP TO CONTENT**



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Credit: Amazon

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If you prefer skin care products with a more nourishing texture, this [Neutrogena retinol oil](#) is ideal, according to board-certified dermatologist [Anetta Reszko](#). “Because it’s oil-based, it cushions the skin and delivers hydration along with the retinol, so it feels less harsh,” she explained. “A few drops pressed into the skin at night can be a good way to treat drier or reactive skin types.”

**Versed Press Restart Gentle Retinol Serum****SKIP TO CONTENT**

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Credit: Amazon

**\$20 at Amazon**

“This one is doubly good, containing microencapsulated retinol and bakuchiol to help supplement the effects of collagen boosting,” shared Dr. Turner, who has found bakuchiol to be a gentler but effective plant-based retinol alternative for the most sensitive skin. Many shoppers enjoy the serum for its lightweight texture and [“very gentle, great for beginners”](#) formula.

**A313 Cream With Retinyl Palmitate****SKIP TO CONTENT**

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Credit: Amazon

**\$46 at Amazon**

If you're a fan of French skin care, Dr. Turner suggests [this popular pick](#) (and Sienna Miller staple!). "It contains the active ingredient retinyl palmitate that must be converted first to retinol, so it is gentler than retinol," he shared. "It, too, is a type of vitamin A that can be used to help boost collagen and support anti-aging goals." The strength is higher than some other retinols on this list, so be sure to follow the instructions and apply no more than a pea-sized amount.

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By Lauren Taylor

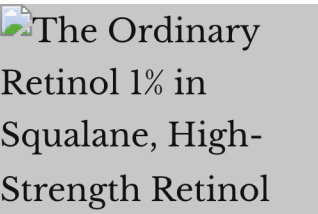
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day and night on  
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SKINCARE

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A hand holding a  
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Demi Moore, 62, Says This \$20 Beauty Product ‘Totally Saved’ Her Sensitive Skin

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serum

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