



Topical Retinoids

Retinoids are a class of compounds derived from vitamin A. They are FDA approved for the treatment of acne because of their beneficial exfoliation (skin peeling) action, especially on plugged oil glands (comedones). Common retinoids include: Tretinoin (Retin-A), Tazarotene (Tazorac, Fabior), Adapalene (Differin, Epiduo), Trifarotene (Aklief)

Recently, considerable attention has been given to Retinoids as an anti-aging agent. Excessive exposure to sunlight prematurely ages skin. Sun damaged skin may appear wrinkled, yellowed, blotchy, coarse, rough, leathery, and dry. Oftentimes, these changes do not appear until ten to twenty years following excessive sun exposure. Retinoids were found to be helpful in treating sun-aging damage to the skin. Primarily, the improvements were noted to be:

1. Exfoliation and increased epidermal turnover. These actions increased the turgor (fullness) of the skin and reduced the appearance of fine wrinkling.
2. New blood vessel formation and increased blood flow (a more healthful color).
3. More uniformed pigmentation
4. Increased collagen formation in the deeper skin layers which can help smooth fine wrinkles.

While Retinoids may be helpful eliminating fine wrinkling (rhytids), they will not remove deep wrinkling or expression lines. As we age, a number of things happen to our face. Our skin loses moisture, it loses elasticity, the fat will re-distribute, and the muscles deteriorate or atrophy. Face-lift surgery, deep chemical peels, and some lasers are the best way to address deep wrinkles. Retinoids are not a replacement for these procedures. However, Retinoids can be an effective adjunctive agent in maintaining a youthful, freshened appearance to the skin, if used correctly.

Recommended Use

1. At night, wash face and wait approximately 10 minutes.
2. Apply a light coating to the face, neck and/or hands. The general rule of thumb is a 'pea-sized' amount should be enough to treat the entire face. The area around the mouth, eyelids, and creases of the nose are the most sensitive. You may want to apply Retin-A less frequently to these areas.
3. Do not wash the skin or apply any other medication for at least two hours after application. It is best to leave the treated area undisturbed overnight.

4. Initially, you may want to apply Retin-A only 2 or 3 times each week. The irritation you may experience with Retin-A occurs 3 day after application. Therefore, you should wait 3 days after the first application to see if your skin becomes irritated. The irritation is usually flaky skin with mild redness. You may also experience a stinging sensation when applying moisturizer or sunscreen. If you do not experience irritation, you should gradually increase your use until you are able to use it every night. You should take nights off when necessary.

Precautions

1. Retin-A may be drying to your skin. For that reason, you may need to use a moisturizer more frequently. The moisturizer you normally use will probably be satisfactory. However, some individuals with sensitive skin find that Eucerin or Cetaphil lotion is especially helpful. We also carry good moisturizers in our office.
2. Because Retin-A is removing the “filtering layers” of skin you may burn more easily when exposed to the sun. For this reason, it is recommended that a sunscreen rated 15 or higher be used everyday. We suggest using a moisturizer with sunscreen every morning with re application one hour prior to sun exposure. Many individuals find that they are sensitive to PABA, which is contained in many sunscreens. Sunscreens can be obtained which do not contain PABA and are recommended for more sensitive skin.
3. No studies have been performed regarding the safety of Retin-A use during pregnancy or during breast-feeding. For that reason, it is recommended that Retin-A not be used if one thinks that they might be pregnant, are trying to conceive, or is breast-feeding. It is always recommended that an individual talk to their obstetrician or pediatrician before taking or applying any medications while pregnant or breast-feeding.
4. Some individuals with more sensitive skin find that Retin-A is too irritating for their skin. It is not uncommon for a rash to develop temporarily. However, if pain or irritation persists or if you have any questions or concerns, it is recommended that you stop Retin-A applications immediately and contact our office. We are always more than happy to see you.
5. It is recommended that individuals using Retin-A be evaluated periodically. For this reason, we ask that you contact the office every year to refill your prescription. Often times the concentration and/or frequency of Retin-A applications can be adjusted at these times to maximize beneficial effects.