

## Retinal, retinol, and retinoids: how to start without irritating the skin

What's the difference between retinal and retinol, how many nights to use it, and which active ingredients not to combine it with.

### What are retinal, retinol, and derivatives

They are all cosmetic retinoids: the skin converts them into retinoic acid, which is the active form. Retinal requires one less conversion step than retinol, so its effects are usually noticed sooner, although it can also be more irritating at first. Encapsulated derivatives and esters, such as retinyl palmitate, are the gentlest and are suitable for reactive skin or for a first-time use.

### How to introduce it: the schedule for the first few weeks

Start two nights a week for two or three weeks, on clean, dry skin, with a pea-sized amount for the entire face. If no peeling occurs, increase to three nights and then to alternate nights. Many skin types never need to use it every day: consistency matters more than frequency.

### The sandwich method for sensitive skin

Apply a thin layer of moisturizer, then the retinoid, and seal with cream again. It reduces irritation without canceling the effect and is the most comfortable way to use it in the eye contour area, where a very small dot is enough and always outside the mobile eyelid.

### What not to combine it with on the same night

Avoid using it on the same day as exfoliants with AHA or BHA, peels, or high-concentration vitamin C: the combination of actives is the usual cause of redness. Alternate nights and use a neutral cleanser. If burning, stinging, or intense peeling occurs, pause for two or three nights and resume less frequently.

### Mandatory sun protection and precautions

A retinoid makes the skin more sensitive to the sun, so SPF 50+ sunscreen every morning is part of the treatment, not an extra. Its use is not recommended during pregnancy or breastfeeding: consult your doctor. Results on texture and fine lines are evaluated after 12 weeks of consistent use.