



SKINCARE INGREDIENTS

THE GOOD, THE BAD & AN EXPLANATION



SKINCARE INGREDIENTS

When choosing skincare products, it's important to check the ingredients list to avoid harmful additives and prioritize beneficial ones. Many products contain harsh chemicals, synthetic additives, and potential irritants that can affect skin health over time. Instead, look for formulas with gentle, nourishing, and skin-supporting ingredients. Understanding what goes into your skincare helps you make safer, more effective choices for healthy, balanced skin.

As you can imagine, this area is a minefield, and labelling needs improvement worldwide. For example, synthetic fragrances are often created in a lab from byproducts of petroleum and natural gas, while natural fragrances come from essential oils and plant extracts. However, even some natural fragrance components can cause irritation, so hypoallergenic and non-irritating fragrance ingredients are best.

Mineral Oil: There are two types: highly refined, cosmetic-grade mineral oil, which is purified and safe for skincare, and unrefined mineral oils derived from petrochemicals, which may contain impurities. The level of refinement determines safety.

Some laws require preservatives, and manufacturers may use a small amount to meet regulations. Checking the full ingredient list can help you determine the concentration of active ingredients and the presence of safer preservatives like phenoxyethanol instead of parabens.

If unsure, research the product or contact the manufacturer.

Context Matters

While certain ingredients are often considered unsafe or harmful, it's important to understand that ingredient safety cannot be judged in isolation. The overall formulation, concentration, and interaction of ingredients within a product play a significant role in determining its effectiveness and safety. Dismissing a product solely based on an ingredient list may overlook formulation science and the rigorous testing conducted by reputable brands. Science matters when it comes to product formulation, and trusting high-quality, well-researched, and medical-grade brands can often be more beneficial than picking apart a formulation based on individual ingredient listings.

Looking at ingredients can be overwhelming. You can start by looking for brands that have "Free From" on their packaging.



RED FLAGS (INGREDIENTS TO AVOID)

- Parabens: Synthetic preservatives that may disrupt hormones and have been linked to breast cancer concerns.
- Phthalates: Can weaken the immune and reproductive systems and impact major organs.
- Formaldehyde: A flammable gas that can irritate the eyes, nose, throat, and skin; also a known carcinogen.
- Triclosan: An antimicrobial agent that may disrupt hormones, cause liver toxicity, and contribute to antibiotic resistance.
- Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS): A harsh irritant that may cause skin sensitivity and disrupt the skin barrier.
- Sodium Laureth Sulfate (SLES): A milder surfactant than SLS but may be contaminated with 1,4-dioxane, a potential carcinogen.
- Fragrances (Parfum): Can cause skin irritation and contact dermatitis; opt for fragrance-free or hypoallergenic formulas.
- Polyethylene Glycol (PEGs): Used as a thickener but may contain ethylene oxide, a known carcinogen.
- Oxybenzone (Benzophenone-3): A UV filter found in many sunscreens that can disrupt hormones.
- Hydroquinone: A skin-lightening agent that may cause organ toxicity and irritation; should only be used under medical supervision.

WINNERS (INGREDIENTS TO LOOK FOR)

- Vitamin A (Retinol & Beta-Carotene): Supports cell turnover, improves acne, reduces fine lines, and enhances skin renewal.
- Vitamin C: A powerful antioxidant that brightens skin, reduces hyperpigmentation, and supports collagen production.
- Vitamin E: Protects against oxidative stress, strengthens the skin barrier, and enhances hydration.
- Hyaluronic Acid: Helps retain moisture, improving hydration and reducing fine lines and wrinkles.
- Niacinamide: A form of vitamin B3 that reduces inflammation, controls oiliness, and supports skin barrier function.
- Ceramides: Strengthen the skin barrier, maintain hydration, and protect against environmental damage.
- Aloe Vera: A gentle, soothing ingredient ideal for sensitive skin, helping with hydration and irritation.
- Essential Fatty Acids (e.g., Jojoba Oil): Provide deep hydration, strengthen the skin barrier, and reduce inflammation.
- Peptides (e.g., Matrixyl 3000): Support collagen production, improve skin elasticity, and reduce fine lines and wrinkles.
- Antioxidants (e.g., Green Tea & Rosemary Extracts): Help stabilize product formulations while supporting skin health and immunity.

OTHER BENEFICIAL INGREDIENTS

- Alpha Hydroxy Acids (AHAs): Natural exfoliators that remove dead skin cells and improve texture.
- Beta Hydroxy Acids (BHAs): Penetrate deeper into the skin than AHAs to help with clogged pores and acne.
- Antibacterial Agents (e.g., Tea Tree Oil): Help reduce acne-causing bacteria and inflammation.
- Pigment Inhibitors (e.g., Licorice Extract & Bearberry Extract): Help brighten skin and reduce hyperpigmentation.
- Kojic Acid: Helps inhibit melanin production to improve hyperpigmentation.

• Safer Preservatives: Phenoxyethanol, sodium benzoate, and butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT) are better alternatives to parabens. These preservatives help prevent microbial growth and extend the shelf life of products. Additionally, BHT, along with other antioxidants, plays a crucial role in stabilizing skincare formulations by protecting ingredients from oxidation and UV degradation, ensuring the product remains effective over time.

FINAL THOUGHTS: INGREDIENT LISTS VS. FORMULATION SCIENCE

While it's crucial to understand what goes into your skincare products, it's equally important to recognize the science behind formulation. Some products may contain ingredients that seem concerning on their own, but when used in a well-balanced formula, they can be safe and effective.

A great way to assess a product is to focus on the first three to four ingredients, as these make up the majority of the formula. Many other ingredients may be present only in trace amounts or as part of a compound that enhances the efficacy of the main ingredients. Instead of fearing every "red flag" ingredient, consider the product's overall formulation, brand reputation, and clinical testing. Trusting high-quality and medical-grade skincare brands can often lead to better long-term skin health outcomes. By being informed about these ingredients, you can make better choices for your skin's health and long-term well-being.

Although I mention the Dirty 30 in the video, I hope this gives a clearer message about ingredients - think of it as a little extra clarity to help you navigate them!



Look for ingredients that will support your skin and health. Remember, the further up the list the ingredient is listed, the higher % of the ingredient is in the product.



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