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Healthy Skin

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DNA Skin Repair Is Now Easily Available

by *Debra Jaliman, MD*

Up until fairly recently, the only way to reverse [sun damage](#) was to have laser treatments, chemical peels or use retinols and prescription [tretinoin](#) creams. A revolutionary innovation in the cosmeceutical industry is changing that. Now all you may need to do is go to your drugstore or department store and look for products that contain DNA repair ingredients. These ingredients now come in every product imaginable — creams, lotions, serums, sunscreens.

And here's the wonderful thing: **they really do work.**

DNA skin repair ingredients are usually based on enzymes derived from a variety of sources, including plankton and plants. Most of the major skin care companies are already selling DNA repair products and are closely following the new research. All these products seem to improve the skin, so it is not necessary to buy the most expensive one. These enzymes work by restoring DNA that has been damaged by free radicals, most often caused by sun exposure, pollution and other environmental factors. DNA damage is what causes sagging, wrinkles and rough-textured skin. In other words, it's what makes you look old. DNA repair products don't seem to fade brown spots, though, and though they soften fine lines, they won't have the dramatic effect of [Botox](#) or [hyaluronic acid fillers](#) that plump deep creases. Still, people really notice a difference after a few weeks of using these products, and they are usually happy with the results.

One of the advantages of most DNA repair products is that unlike tretinoin and retinols (which should only be used at night), they do not interact with sunlight and can be used during the day. In fact, a few sunscreens already include DNA repair ingredients. Although the research is still coming in, this may be the wave of the future in sun protection.

For people with scientific curiosity, there is a very cool way of checking to see how much their skin is damaged and even pinpoint what areas need most treatment. A Wood's lamp uses light to examine the condition of the skin. Damaged areas look noticeably darker. You can have it done by a dermatologist, of course, but you can also buy your own Wood's lamp for less than a \$100 and check your own skin. For most people, it is a sobering reality to see just how much damage their skin has sustained. The interesting thing is that the Wood's lamp can also be used to see if your DNA repair product is really working. Do a baseline check, and then check again after a couple of months of using the product.

Now, for a truly thorough look, ask your dermatologist to take a picture of your skin with a special UV camera. You will not only get a printout that shows the condition of your skin, you will get a description showing how much damage you have in comparison with others in the same age group and ethnicity. Not every dermatologist has a UV camera, so always call ahead and ask.

On a personal note, I had this done years ago. I was fascinated to see the pattern on my face. I had mild damage everywhere (even though I always wear sunscreen!), except on my forehead, which was nice and clear. The explanation: I had worn bangs for many years, protecting my forehead without knowing it.