

# The truth about Glycolic Acid

**Dive into what the ingredient is, how it works, and its myths we've busted.**

*Section: Ingredient stories*

What is Glycolic Acid?

Glycolic acid is an alpha hydroxy acid (AHA) or fruit acid found in tomatoes, pineapples, sour milk and papaya. It has a starring role in plenty of the best skincare products and for good reason. As well as being a natural exfoliator, it's an excellent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant.

How does Glycolic Acid work?

AHA moment

Glycolic acid dissolves layers of dead skin cells on the surface of your skin to brighten complexion, minimise fine lines, fix dark spots and smooth roughness.

“Glycolic acid irritates sensitive skin”

Check in with your skin

As ever, listen to your skin. Some glycolic acid formulations are actually used to treat skin conditions like eczema and keratosis. Start slow and always moisturise after exfoliating. A splash of water can neutralise the acid if your experience burning.

“Glycolic Acid thins your skin”

That's a big no

Some people think that exfoliators wear skin down, but scrubbing away dead cells is safe as long as you don't overdo it. There's even research that shows AHAs increase skin thickness. Glycolic acid also improves collagen density and elastic fibre quality, so this myth's looking even thinner.

“You can't mix Glycolic Acid with other actives”

False (mostly)

For most people, combining glycolic acid with other potent dermatological ingredients is safe if done carefully. Pair with azelaic acid for blemish-prone and uneven skin tone. Team with retinol for brown spot marks (unless you have sensitive skin). Every skin is different, so start slow and build up to find your happy place.

How to integrate glycolic acid into your routine

More than a peel

You'll see glycolic acid in cleansers, serums and toners too. For dry skin types, choose a product

with around 5% glycolic acid, or one that washes off. For normal to oily skin, you can go up to 10% or try a leave-on.