

The truth about lactic acid

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

Section: Ingredient stories

What is lactic acid?

Cleopatra's secret wasn't out until the mid 1990s, when lactic acid hit the beauty shelves. Like glycolic acid, lactic acid is an AHA, a naturally-derived acid group also known as fruit acids. Despite the name, this one is usually suitable for vegans.

How does lactic acid work?

Milk-soft exfoliation

As one of the milder AHA acids, lactic acid is a great exfoliation choice for those with sensitive skin. Lactic acid pulls in water for plumpness, fades dark spots and unclogs pores too.

"All skincare acids are the same"

The sensitive acid

Lactic acid molecules are bigger than other acids, so it does its amazing beauty work on the skin surface. This makes it an ideal resurfacer for those with sensitive skin. It's also less likely than glycolic or salicylic acid to upset skin's pH balance.

"Lactic acid is only good for hydration"

Brighter skin without irritation

By naturally dissolving the 'glue' that binds skin cells, lactic acid boosts cell turnover. That means a brighter complexion, less hyperpigmentation, smoother texture and clearer pores without causing skin irritation - ideal for sensitive skin.

"Lactic acid is not strong enough for blemish-prone skin"

Anti-bacterial material

While beta-hydroxy acids like salicylic acid may be best for blemishes, lactic acid has antimicrobial properties. That means it kills pathogens like some bad bacteria, helping to balance skin's biome and support breakout prevention.

How to integrate lactic acid into your routine

The gentle acid

Lactic acid should be used at home in a maximum concentration of 10%. Apply at night as it can make skin more sensitive to sun. Don't forget to patch test with any new product.