

The truth about salicylic acid

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

Section: Ingredient stories

What is salicylic acid?

Equally famous as the active ingredient of aspirin, this bathroom cabinet standby helps beauty headaches too. It's renowned for its ability to whisk away dead cells and bacteria, making it an effective treatment for acne and blemishes, among other things.

How does salicylic acid work?

A deep clean for skin

This blemish-busting acid goes deep to get the job done. Salicylic acid penetrates to the inner layers of skin, breaking down dead skin cells. This makes pores less visible, eases inflammation and prevents breakouts.

“Salicylic acid is for only for blemishes”

And then some

While it's famous for keeping oil and dead cells clear of pores and stopping bacteria growth, this natural exfoliator will also treat dullness and fine lines. We say that makes it a great addition to your anti-ageing routine too.

“Salicylic acid is just like other exfoliants”

Unlike watery AHAs, salicylic acid is an oil-soluble BHA. This means it's great at sneaking past the lipid layer on the skin's surface and cleaning trapped sebum, cells and bacteria.

“You can't combine it with potent ingredients”

Just go carefully

In fact, salicylic acid plays well with other skincare ingredients. As an exfoliant, salicylic acid preps skin so retinol can penetrate better. If you're sensitive, don't use them at the same time. As always, start low and slow.

How to integrate salicylic acid into your routine

Introduce gradually

Use in a cleanser with confidence, but be cautious with salicylic acid exfoliants. More than three times a week and you're risking dryness. For blemishes, use a formulation higher than 2%. Avoid altogether if you have very dry skin.