

# Retin-A (Tretinoin)

## Definition

Tretinoin skin preparations are a family of drugs all similar to Vitamin A. Tretinoin is used to treat acne and aged, sun damaged skin. Tretinoin works best when used in combination with alpha hydroxyl acid preparations. If used over a period of years, tretinoin will continue to reverse aging of the skin and can continue improving the skin's appearance even ten years after starting treatment.

## Action

Tretinoin unplugs acne follicles and brings acne pimples (comedones) to the surface. This is why tretinoin makes acne look worse in the first few weeks of treatment. Tretinoin will reverse some of the changes of photo aging which will lighten brown spots and lead to the disappearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

## Side Effects

Tretinoin makes the skin more sensitive to sunlight so it is easier to get a sun burn. Tretinoin causes dryness, redness, tenderness, and swelling of the skin. These side effects lessen with time.

## Safety

Tretinoin is very safe when used as directed. Several studies show tretinoin is safe to use during pregnancy, however you should only use tretinoin if it is okay with your obstetrician.

## How to Use

You should always wash your face twice a day with a mild non-soap cleanser suggested by your aesthetician. Pat skin dry with towel. Let your face dry for 10-15 minutes before applying tretinoin.

Apply to face every night before bed; do not apply near eyes or lips.

Apply a moisturizer containing a sunscreen of 15 or higher to the skin each morning. This will help counteract the dryness and scaling. Avoid sun exposure between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm when the sun's rays are the strongest.

If your skin becomes too irritated, too dry, or too red, decrease the application of Tretinoin to every other night or every other third night.

If you plan to have hair removed by waxing, especially of the upper lip, discontinue use of tretinoin 3-4 weeks prior to the treatment. Otherwise, you may be left with a sore area which could heal with a brown spot.

If you plan to have a chemical peel or Microdermabrasion, discontinue treatment 1-2 days prior to the procedure and 1-2 days after the treatment.

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