

# My sensitive skin only improved when I gave up beauty products

*Rosie Green* explains why we all need to go on a lotion and potion drought

I have learnt the hard way that too many beauty products equals an unhappy epidermis. First off, let's remind ourselves of our skincare routines during those pandemic lockdowns. Unable to visit salons and with a surfeit of time on our hands, many of us whiled away the hours watching "skinfluencers" on social media. Then, empowered by a little knowledge and a lot of clickbait, became our own facialists.

We embraced the trend for potent single ingredient products – and proceeded to use all of them, all at once. We began layering our hyaluronic acids with our retinols and our niacinamide in the quest for the ultimate radiant glow. I even derma-rolled my face with what looked like an instrument of medieval torture.

Of course, I should have known better because before the pandemic, as a beauty editor in my early twenties, I tested thousands of serums, creams, essences, mists and exfoliators sent my way.

As a result, my skin progressed from being merely "sensitive" to having full-blown rosacea. I self-medicated with more creams. Then, a decade later, I went on maternity leave and the bags of creams, serums and potions stopped arriving – so I started to use one moisturiser, twice daily.

The surprise? My skin looked better than it ever had – calmer and clearer. My dermatologist friends credited this improvement to my product drought. In fact, one of the UK's pre-eminent cosmetic specialists, Dr Vicky Dondos, says our "more is more" product culture is the reason behind most of the compromised complexions she sees.

Reducing your regime to a

carefully calibrated, multi-benefit cream appears to be the way forward. Our mothers would approve too. After all, many of them took the one-pot approach to their skincare and were brand-loyal for life. (I'm thinking of Joanna Lumley and her Astral moisturiser routine.)

Now, I'm not suggesting everyone goes as basic as this, but I am saying spend less time and money and your face will be better for it. The bottom line? Cleanse nightly (many experts believe water in the morning will protect your skin's microbiome from being compromised), repair with a scientifically formulated, multi-ingredient cream and shield from ageing UV rays with sunscreen. You're welcome.

## FOUR EASY WAYS TO PARE BACK YOUR ROUTINE

**1 Put your skin on an elimination diet:** "My first rule is, do no harm," says Dr Dondos. "Steer clear of any harsh exfoliating products and just stick to a simple cleanser and moisturiser." She often sees an improvement within weeks, once clients follow her advice. Day after day, she meets women attempting to perfect their skin with a plethora of products doing the exact opposite. Overloading on too many exfoliating potions can compromise the skin barrier (which keeps hydration in and nasties out) meaning it gets irritated. After following the elimination skin diet, you can reintroduce products with active ingredients carefully and individually on a weekly or monthly basis.

## 2 Treat your skin to rest days

**2** If you are going to use anything with potentially irritating ingredients, such as retinol, try the skin cycling approach. "The concept involves using specific active ingredients only on certain days, followed by 'rest' days," says Dr Alexis Granite, consultant dermatologist for CeraVe. "The rest phase allows the skin to repair and reduces the risk of irritation. A four-day cycle is the most popular, which means using an active ingredient for two nights, followed by two nights of rest, then repeating. Anyone can benefit from skin cycling, but particularly those with sensitive skin."

## 3 Splash out on tweakments

**3** There's a new trend emerging among beauty experts: using simple products for daily skin health but relying on tweakments to deliver the anti-ageing hit. Good for those with sensitive skin, this involves following a regime of quarterly injectables. This could be in the form of shots of hyaluronic acid-based Profilo beneath the skin's surface to deliver a hit of hydration and skin plumpness, Botox for line erasing and IPL (intense pulsed light) to tackle pigmentation.

## 4 Find your multi-use product

**4** Instead of a beauty cabinet full of products, skin experts recommend looking for one cream or serum that has multiple benefits (hydrating, collagen-boosting, pigmentation targeting and so on). Labs and chemists work hard to carefully combine and calibrate active ingredients to maximise results while minimising irritation. Discover one that suits your skin profile from the four on the left.

## IF YOU WANT JUST ONE MOISTURISER



**Best for fragile skin**  
Aveeno Face Calm and Restore Triple Oat Serum, £14.99; boots.com



**Best customised**  
Klira The Special, monthly subscription, £49; klira.skin



**Best overnight rejuvenation**  
Sarah Chapman Digital Rest, £57; sarah-chapman.com



**Best for value**  
Olay's Collagen Peptide24 Max, £44 (currently £22 at Boots); boots.com



Glowing: Rosie's skin has cleared since she ditched serums, essences and mists