

SKIN DEEP

A Natural Smoother Gets a Boost

Hyaluronic acid, in new formulations, shows promise of being more effective.

By COURTNEY RUBIN

After spending hours on airplanes to help run her family's photography business, Sonia Deasy was desperate for a quick solution to her dehydrated skin. "I'm a mother of five," Ms. Deasy said. "I don't have time for a fuss."

So Ms. Deasy, who lives in Dublin, enlisted her sister, a biochemist, to help make a hyaluronic acid serum. Within a week of its release last year, the product, Pestle & Mortar Pure Hyaluronic Serum, sold out.

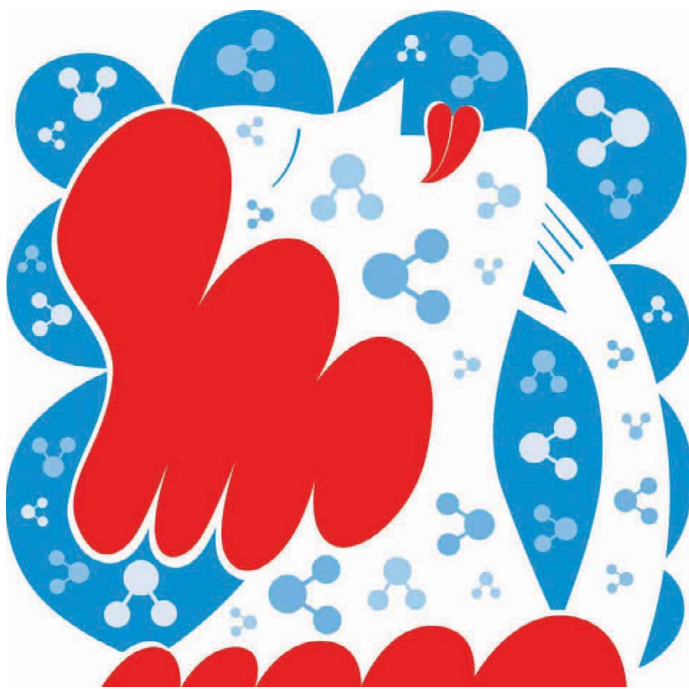
Cameron Silver, who owns Decades, a vintage boutique in Los Angeles, described the serum as being "like Xanax for your skin: It kind of takes the edge off."

Mr. Silver, who often appears on television, added: "It's like Vaseline around the lens. It just makes the skin a little bit smoother, a little bit dewier."

Hyaluronic acid — a clear, sugary goo that occurs naturally in the body, where it lubricates joints and even sustains the shape of the eyeballs — is not a new beauty product. Dermatologists have long touted its plumping and moisturizing ability because it can carry up to 1,000 times its weight in water. Its downside: The molecules were too big to penetrate the skin's surface (scientists call this high molecular weight), so results could easily be washed away.

But new formulations have solved that problem, potentially making them more effective and with longer-lasting results. Products like La Prairie's eight-month-old Anti-Aging Rapid Response Booster and Eve Lom's Brightening Mask, coming in February, offer a cocktail of molecules at lower weights, which can make their way into lower layers of skin.

Once there, there is evidence that they may stimulate collagen growth, said Dr. S. Tyler Hollmig, the director of laser and aesthetic dermatology at Stanford University. (Further research and publication in peer-reviewed journals would be needed for him



JAMES O'BRIEN

to change that "may" to a "can," he said.)

Fillerina, a 14-day topical treatment designed to mimic a filler (only without the needle), includes six different weights of hyaluronic acid molecules that scientists spent six years testing.

"The largest molecules give good plumping of the skin in the outer layer," said Manuela Guglielmo, the director of marketing for the Italian company Labo, which makes Fillerina. "The smaller ones go deeper." (The big molecules are better at moisturizing, hence the need for both.)

A study published in the 2014 Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology showed that Fillerina measurably reduced wrinkle depth and skin sagging, and increased lip and cheek volume. The study, whose length was 30 days, did not address collagen growth, as collagen takes at least six weeks to form.

Similarly, studies of La Prairie Anti-Aging Rapid Response Booster and Kane NY Serum Savant, which have lower-weight molecules, showed that they measurably improved skin at the two- and four-week mark; but they, too, did not measure collagen growth. (Kane NY's study was done independently; La Prairie's wasn't.)

Dr. Barbara Sturm, a dermatologist in Düsseldorf, Germany, recently introduced



New products containing hyaluronic acid, from top: Pestle & Mortar Pure Hyaluronic Serum, Fillerina by Labo and Eve Lom's Brightening Mask.

hyaluronic acid ampuls, available on Net-a-Porter, that you snap open and apply directly to deep wrinkles.

"It's like a therapeutic serum: It has a long-term effect," said Dr. Sturm, who created the product in part because she wanted her patients to be able to apply it at home after more-invasive procedures. "It's not just, 'I apply my skin-care product and tomorrow I have to do it again because the effect is gone.'"

Tiffany Masterson, the founder of the skin-care company Drunk Elephant, uses a bioengineered form of hyaluronic acid that she says breaks down more slowly, "so it can be delivered over longer periods of time." Ms. Masterson is so pleased with the ingredient, which she offers in a serum, that next year she will include it in two new products, her Hydra B Vitamin Gel and Lala Day Cream.

The consumer appeal of hyaluronic acid is that it's a natural component of skin — "People like it because it's not foreign," Dr. Hollmig said — and it is turning up in a baffling array of products, though not all are created equal. (How to tell what grade of hyaluronic acid is in a product? You can't, unless companies choose to tell you; they are required only to list ingredients.)

"Ten years ago you only saw hyaluronic acid in a few high-end moisturizers," said Randy Schueller, a cosmetic chemist who founded thebeautybrains.com, a website and podcast where scientists examine skin-care ingredients and industry claims. "Now you see it even in powdered makeup, which is kind of ridiculous."

That's because hyaluronic acid absorbs moisture, so if there is an appreciable amount in a powder, the product is more likely to clump. Cosmetic powders in general are not a good delivery system for moisturizing and anti-aging ingredients because they are not applied all over the face, and they do not provide a uniform coating, he said.

If you choose just one product, Mr. Schueller suggested that a serum was best. They traditionally have the highest levels of hyaluronic acid, he said, "so in that sense they give you the most bang for your buck."

WHAT WORKS

Being Kind to Winter's Curls

By RACHEL FELDER

Winter is a particularly challenging season for curly hair, which tends to be drier than its straighter counterparts. Cold air, wind and indoor heating can leave curls parched and rough; raw, wet days can cause frizz.

So several companies are introducing products aimed at curly-heads, all designed to cleanse, hydrate or style with their specific needs in mind.

These offerings combine moisturizing oils with targeted ingredients for hold and conditioning. Although each product can be used on its own, combining several at once is a popular strategy.

"Not every woman has the same curl, so not every product is going to work on every woman," said David Babai, a hairstylist whose clients have included curly-haired celebrities like Kate

FROM TOP: BUMBLE & BUMBLE'S BB. CURL COLLECTION, ORIBE CURL CONTROL SILKENING CRÈME, KEVIN.MURPHY KILLER.CURLS AND SACHAJUAN HAIR CLEANSING CREAM.

Hudson, Nicole Kidman and Sarah Jessica Parker. "It's a matter of mixing one curl product with another to make the right little cocktail."

Some of the products in the Bumble & bumble Bb. Curl collection, which is to arrive in stores in early January, lend themselves to that type of blending. For example, there is a gloppy gel-oil hybrid designed to prevent frizz in very curly hair. A small dab mixed with the line's

less intense Defining Creme offers an effective amount of hold and smoothness. The six-product collection includes a patented blend of exotic moisturizing ingredients like cupuacu butter and the oils of pracaxi and babassu nuts.

The L'Oréal Paris Advanced Haircare Extraordinary Oil Curls Collection, which includes three curl products, also incorporates a variety of oils into its formula. The standout, about to reach stores, is a dense mask with a coconut-heavy scent that looks like a creamy mousse dessert. A thick application for a few minutes helps replenish hair's moisture.

For some women with curly hair, the goal is simply to control and define locks without making them look and feel limp or overly stiff. Oribe Curl Control Silkening Crème, introduced earlier this



ISTOCK

year, shapes curls with a light touch. Its formula includes hydrating avocado and jojoba oil and Oribe's distinctive fragrance. Kevin. Murphy Killer. Curls, a new item in a popular line sold in salons, is a lotion that adds contour to waves and coils without being heavy.

Co-washing — cleaning hair with conditioner alone — has become a routine for many curly-heads. Sachajuan Hair Cleansing Cream is nourishing and particularly gentle on curls, although it is appropriate for all hair types.

The key to using many of these products is moderation.

"When it comes to products, less is always more," Mr. Babai said. "A woman with curly hair should moisturize and hydrate her hair, but if conditioner builds up, after a while it snaps your hair. Using the right amount is great. Overusing really isn't."

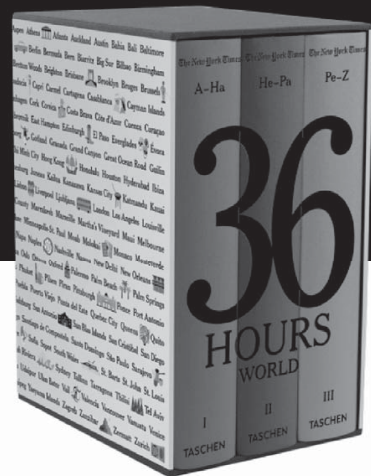
CALLING ALL GLOBETROTTERS

3 volumes of the best-selling 36 Hours travel series, covering 365 destinations worldwide

TAKE 36 HOURS WITH YOU EVERYWHERE

Key card inside provides instant and unlimited access to digital editions of all 365 destinations.

nytimes.com/store/books



\$125