



TOPICAL OPTIONS

THE PIGMENT PREVENTERS

The most important step in putting the brakes on melanin is blocking tyrosinase to impede discoloration from forming. "Hydroquinone, kojic and azelaic acids, as well as vitamin C, are the mainstay inhibitors," says New York dermatologist Robert Anolik, MD. Hydroquinone is the "go-to," but it should only be used for three months because of the risk of ochronosis, a dark, blue-black pigment that is nearly impossible to erase. Once the pigment lifts, switch to a plant-based tyrosinase inhibitor, like kojic acid, that can be used long-term.



AZELAIC ACID

Find it in: Arcona Brightening Drops; BIOEFFECT EGF + 2A Daily Treatment

Azelaic acid originated as an anti-acne ingredient, but once doctors noticed its brightening effects, it became a way to curb hyperpigmentation, and even rosacea. "Azelaic acid, which is the material that surfaces from ringworm—it's a natural anti-inflammatory agent and depigmenter—has the ability to lighten skin, but not as much as hydroquinone," says San Francisco dermatologist Vic Narurkar, MD. "I prescribe Finacea—it contains azelaic acid—when patients need to take a break from hydroquinone because it is not as abrupt of a departure from the lightening process."

LICORICE EXTRACT

Find it in: NeoStrata Enlighten Illuminating Serum; Murad Rapid Age Spot and Pigment Lightening Serum

Licorice contains glabridin, a natural tyrosinase inhibitor, making it a gentle substitute for chemical-based options.

VITAMIN C

Find it in: Rodial Vit C Energising Face Mask; Dermalogica BioLumin-C Serum

Antioxidant-rich vitamin C increases the body's natural levels of antioxidants glutathione and vitamin E, which have a direct correlation to the production of pheomelanin, a type of melanin, by slowing down tyrosinase.

HYDROQUINONE

Find it in: Rodan + Fields Reverse Skin Lightening Treatment; Glytone Dark Spot Corrector

Available over the counter and via prescription, hydroquinone is still the longest-running solution—and the fastest, although it won't lighten dark patches overnight—for erasing discoloration. "Hydroquinone remains the best option for blocking pigment development," says Valencia, CA dermatologist Bernard Raskin, MD. To make the most of its brightening abilities, pair it with an exfoliating retinoid and inflammation-blocking steroid.

KOJIC ACID

Find it in: SkinCeuticals Discoloration Defense; Glo Skin Beauty Lightening Serum

Another naturally derived lightening agent (it comes from mushrooms and rice), kojic acid is antibacterial and antifungal, and a good alternative for those who are too sensitive for stronger brightening ingredients.



glo
SKIN
BEAUTY

Lightening Serum

"Another naturally derived lightening agent (it comes from the mushrooms and rice), kojic acid is antibacterial and antifungal, and a good alternative for those who are too sensitive for stronger brightening ingredients."