



Resources

Facial Serums

by Dasha Saian

As skin care professionals, we all know what a dramatic difference using an amazing serum can make. It can take years off a client's appearance, reduce fatigue, tighten pores, minimize rosacea, soothe dryness, reduce hyperpigmentation, and diminish wrinkles.

Understanding Serums

As defined in the dictionary – a serum is the clear, yellowish fluid obtained upon separating whole blood into its solid and liquid components after it has been allowed to clot, so it is not surprising that the precursors of modern-day serums were based on horse blood, egg albumin, and bovine placenta. Packaging these products in sterile ampoules preserved with oxyquinoline (and later, the invention of parabens) made them available commercially. Ever notice that your most active serums come in the tiniest bottles? This is a practice that stayed with us since the early days of short product shelf life, which meant small batches had to be made and used up quickly before the product spoiled.

Serums have come quite a long way and have evolved greatly since their debut in the 1930s! Yes, believe it or not, that is when the first facial serums began being produced commercially. Of course, the shelf life was very short since they

tended to be very susceptible to bacterial and fungal infections, but the principle behind these products was created.

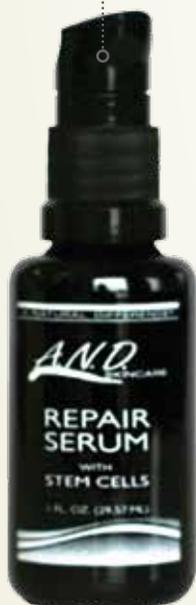
The first serums were formulated to reduce wrinkles and tighten the appearance of the face. These serums were generally based on albumin – the tightening ingredient in egg whites, which have been used by women all over the world for ages as a facial mask. Egg whites were separated from the yolks, whisked up, and applied to the face and neck for 15 to 20 minutes, then washed off with cold water. This produced a lifted and tightened result similar to that of a serum. I vividly remember my mother doing this in the kitchen 25 years ago – her face was always pulled up so much, it meant absolutely no talking for 20 minutes!

So what is so special about serums? The wonderful thing is that they pack a powerful punch of concentrated active ingredients! A serum's molecule is usually very small and delivers the ingredients to all skin layers without clogging the pores with

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any oil, glycerin, or other comedogenic fillers. A product like this is usually gel-like and water-based, so it absorbs instantly and does not sit on the surface of the skin. The benefit of this gel-like, oil-free consistency is that, unlike some creams, a serum can be used very closely around the eyes without causing the development of milia and irritation. While younger clients like the tight feeling of an oil-free product such as a serum, older clients may feel like their skin is too dry and in order to replenish, they choose to apply cream over the serum. This is a great way to provide a barrier that keeps the serum from evaporating, as well as provide a double layer of active ingredients (such as peptides and hyaluronic acid).

Serum Advancements

In recent years, there has been a plethora of advances in product formulation, the best being the elimination of parabens and chemicals from many product lines. Natural preservatives like citric acid, ethylhexylglycerin, and phenoxyethanol

efficiently provide a two-year shelf life for most serums and do not have any toxic side effects associated with parabens and similar chemical preservatives. The best base for serums is water and to get that silky, smooth gel feeling, the best and most potent moisturizing ingredient on the market is hyaluronic acid. Did you know that the loss of skin elasticity that comes with aging is often the result of decreasing hyaluronic acid levels? Hyaluronic acid is the best topical-hydrating agent and a potent anti-inflammatory that stops itching and burning, is very soothing, and results in smoother skin. The best type of hyaluronic acid is a vegan, low-molecular weight hyaluronic acid. This is not harvested from a rooster comb, or chicken cartilage, but is plant-based and manipulated in a laboratory for a perfect, hypoallergenic product! This ingredient is the same type of gel that is used in dermal fillers such as Restylane® and JUVÉDERM® and is completely safe.

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Active Ingredients

Now that we know the best base for a serum, let us talk a little about the best active ingredients that we can add to the blend. Since we want to reduce wrinkles and give the face a more youthful appearance, peptides are a great choice. Peptides are small fragments of proteins, and proteins are the key building blocks of most living tissues. Certain kinds of peptides have an avid affinity for copper, to which they bind very tightly. The resulting compound consisting of a peptide and a copper atom has become known as a copper peptide. A distinctive feature of GHK copper peptides is that they reduce scar tissue formation, while stimulating normal skin remodeling. In other words, they help better restore the damaged area to its original look.

Acetyl Hexapeptide-8 (Argireline®) improves wrinkle depth, wrinkle volume, and roughness. This peptide can significantly modulate muscle contraction, thereby, destabilizing the cell so it cannot release the neurotransmitters that make

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the muscle contract, thus preventing formation of lines and wrinkles. Argireline® reduces pre-existing wrinkle depth and relaxes facial tension. Matrixyl-3000® minimizes crow's feet and laugh lines and prevents from further damage and wrinkle formation. Trylogen® boosts synthesis of Collagen I, III, and IV, uniforms fibril diameter and spacing, and inhibits enzymatic breakdown, avoiding excessive collagen damage.

There are many serums made with powerful brighteners and antioxidants, such as vitamin C. Three of the most potent forms of vitamin C available on the market today are ascorbyl glucoside, sodium ascorbyl phosphate, and magnesium ascorbyl phosphate. This powerful antioxidant combination in

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a serum fights free radicals, stimulates collagen production, nourishes the skin, reduces the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, and brightens and stabilizes skin tone.

As alternatives to the toxic hydroquinone, which has steadily lost popularity on the market during the past five years, some wonderful brightening ingredients have emerged recently. Three of the most potent non-toxic whitening agents available on the market today are Tyrostat™ (derived from rumex occidentalis extract), Nonapeptide-1 (Melanostatin®5), and alpha-arbutin, which address the effects of discoloration and hyperpigmentation on the skin. These natural ingredients prevent hyperproduction of melanin and further activation of tyrosinase, thus blocking melanin synthesis for better control over skin tone and brown spots. When used daily, a serum with alpha-arbutin promotes brightening on all skin types, minimizes the appearance of liver and age spots, and can reduce the degree of skin tanning after ultraviolet exposure.

It is always best to apply serums after cleansing the skin and before the application of moisturizers. This is typically the last step in a facial, and I recommend using your galvanic machine to increase the serum's penetration, since most are ionizable. A treatment like this, with the right product, is guaranteed to wow clients and provide them with a healthy lift and glow!



Dasha Saian is the co-founder and marketing director of SAIAN® Natural Clinical Skin Care and has over 15 years of experience in the spa industry. In addition to her Business/Marketing degree, she is a licensed aesthetician, certified nutrition and wellness consultant, and certified family herbalist. Saian gives lectures and classes internationally and regularly contributes to global trade publications. She is an expert adviser on natural living, alkaline diet, alternative oncology protocols, and positive body image.

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