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DREAMY SPRING TRENDS

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BATTLE OF THE BRIGHTENERS

Youthful skin—you have it or you don't, right? Wrong. With the perfect product, a glowing complexion *will* be yours. *By Malena Harbers*

It was when I met Beyoncé that it struck me. Which of her many assets did I covet the most? The killer curves? The voice? No. I realized, for me, it was that flawless, glowing skin.

NYC-based skincare guru Dr Doris Day confirms I'm not alone in my new beauty obsession: "The number-one skin complaint today is lack of radiance and an uneven skintone," she says. This uneven pigmentation can be caused by ageing, acne, medication, illness or pregnancy. Add sun exposure on top and it's all made worse.

London-based super-facialist Vaishaly Patel has also noticed a demand for natural ways to brighten skin. "We're becoming aware of the long-term effects of Botox, chemical peels and lasers [which, in some cases, can exacerbate uneven pigmentation]," she says. "Women want younger, brighter skin, but they want to achieve it naturally."

Skin brighteners originated in Japan, but now the western beauty industry has developed real hero products that will whisk away unwanted colour patches without causing further damage.

Read on to discover the buzz ingredients for that much-desired springtime glow and which products you'll find them in.

BUZZ INGREDIENT: ACTIVE C

HOW IT WORKS Antioxidants such as vitamin C help prevent UV rays from damaging our skin (and causing patches of pigmentation) and reduce existing dark spots. But did you know that there's a new, souped-up form of the vitamin, active C, that's both an antioxidant and an anti-cluster agent? "It works so that, when pigmentation does occur, colour appears as individual spots rather than clusters," says Dr Angelika Galdi, head chemist at Kiehl's. The result? Small spots of pigment that are far less noticeable than large blotches.

FIND IT IN Clearly Corrective Dark Spot Solution (4), £36, by Kiehl's (01273 738 910) uses fast-acting active C to keep skintone uniform and its super-light texture is ideal for wearing underneath moisturiser and foundation. For the ultimate skin-luminising treat, try *Crème de la Mer's* three-step system *Blanc de la Mer*, comprising *The Brightening Lotion Intense*, £65; *The Brightening Infusion Intense*, £85; and *The Brightening Essence Intense*, £220 (0870 034 2566). The combined mix of vitamin C- and E-rich algae in the lotion, gel and serum lifts discoloration, while tourmaline crystals reflect the light, so skin looks instantly polished and even.

BUZZ INGREDIENT: LIQUORICE ROOT EXTRACT

HOW IT WORKS "Liquorice acts as an antioxidant to mop up the damage done to cells by UV light," says consultant dermatologist Dr Nick Lowe. Its action goes further still, attacking the heart of the pigmentation-making process by slowing down an enzyme called tyrosinase. "Tyrosinase is essential for producing pigment, so by interrupting the process, less or no pigmentation will be made."

FIND IT IN Nine powerful ingredients are combined in Dr Nick Lowe's *Super Light Skin Tone Perfecter Cream* (7), £18.99 (08450 708 090). For a twice-weekly power wash, opt for Dermalogica's two-part powder and liquid system *PowerLiftant ChromaWhite Trx* (13), £57 (0800 591 818). Or try *Mega-Bright Skin Tone Correcting Serum* (12), £46, by Dr Andrew Weil for *Origins* (0800 731 4039) — with calming white peony and chestnut rose, it's ideal for sensitive skin that easily reddens.

BUZZ INGREDIENTS: PLANT EXTRACTS

HOW THEY WORK "Acids extracted from plants and flowers melt away dead skin cells, stimulating circulation and boosting radiance," says Vaishaly Patel. Certain non-acid extracts, such as wild daisy, target pigment production. First, they slow the melanin-producing enzyme; second, they render it less potent; and finally, they stop any pigment that is produced from reaching the skin's surface.

FIND THEM IN *REN's* *Bio Retinoid Anti-Ageing Concentrate* (2), £42 (renskincare.com) — natural plant extracts such as Andean musk-rose-seed oil mimic the complexion-smoothing benefits of retinol. *Darphin's* *Idil Resource Smoothing Retexturizing Radiance Cream* (9), £50 (0870 034 2566), relies on pyruvic acid from the hibiscus flower to munch away dead skin cells; while *L'Occitane's* *Immortelle Brightening Essence* (10), £35 (loccitane.co.uk), containing wild daisy and garden nasturtium extracts, is super-reflective and blurs imperfections.

BUZZ INGREDIENT: GLYCOLIC ACID

HOW IT WORKS Already got visible pigmentation? "Glycolic acid increases the removal of pigmented cells to enhance the effect of other products," says the International Dermal Institute's Lesley Corridan. But don't expect immediate results, as "It takes time for new skin cells to make their way to the surface." And be cautious: it can be irritating, so get your doctor's advice if you have sensitive skin.

FIND IT IN Prep skin with *Brightening Activator* (8), £28.50, by Super by Dr Nicholas Perricone (getsuper.co.uk). Follow with *La Roche-Posay's* *Pigment Control* (14), £29 (0800 055 6822), or try *Avon's* *Anew Clinical Resurfacing Expert Smoothing Fluid* (5), £25 (avonshop.co.uk) — it's like microdermabrasion in a bottle.

BUZZ INGREDIENT: VITAMIN B3

HOW IT WORKS B3 is every dermatologist's hero ingredient for an even skintone. "Pigment spreads through your blood vessels," explains Dr Lowe. B3 acts like a dam in the bloodstream, so colour deposits are minimised. And, says Corridan, it's been shown to prevent pigment transfer by up to 68 per cent.

FIND IT IN *L'Oréal Paris's* *Youth Code Luminize Day Cream* (1), £14.99 (0800 030 4032), which relies on vitamins B3 and Cg (a slow-release form of vitamin C) for its brightening power. Got one or

two pesky blotches? Try treating each one with *StriVectin-EV's* *Get Even Spot Repair* (3), £45 (020 8740 2085). For a wide-ranging approach to a clear complexion, use *Philosophy's* *Miracle Worker Dark Spot Corrector* (6), £52 (0844 068 108) — a mix of ten skin-brighteners launches a full-blown attack on dark patches.

Add a little extra oomph to your radiance regime

Try one of these skin-brightening boosters

THE FACIAL

Pair Aromatherapy Associates's nourishing facial oils and active peels with a pain-free dose of electrical micro-current (to stimulate circulation and lymph drainage) in its *Ultimate Radiance Facial*, £120 for 90 mins (020 7838 117), and you've got a winning formula for a plumped-up complexion.

THE LUNCH-TIME TREATMENT

One session of *Clear + Brilliant's* super-light laser, £350 per session (four to six recommended); *The Cosmetic Skin Clinic*; 01753 646 660), is the skincare equivalent of a buff and shine man. Gently sloughing off damaged cells in millions of tiny treatment areas, it creates a radiant and even skintone. With zero recovery time and a luminous glow in a flash, we're sold.

THE SUPPLEMENT

Derma One, £38.50 for 60, Imedeen (0845 5544 999). Two of these fish-protein-packed tablets (key for regenerating collagen, resulting in healthy, glowing skin) per day give lacustrine skin a new lease of life by restoring radiance from within. No wonder, *Jessica Biel* is a fan! ■