

Topical Retinoids (Tretinoin, Adapalene, Tazarotene)

Background

- Retinoids are a form of Vitamin A. They are FDA approved for the treatment of acne because of their beneficial exfoliation (skin peeling) action, especially on plugged oil glands (comedones).
- Considerable attention has been given to retinoids as anti-aging agents. Retinoids have been found to be helpful in treating age-related changes to the skin.

Application Instructions

- Wash your face or other affected area with warm water and a gentle, hydrating cleanser. Pat dry.
- Place a pea-sized amount of the retinoid on your fingertip and then evenly distribute small amounts to the intended treatment areas.
- Gently rub the retinoid into your skin creating a light coating.
- Avoid the areas around the mouth, creases at the sides of the nose and around the eyes. These areas are very sensitive.
- Initially, you may want to apply the retinoid only 2 or 3 times each week.
- Frequent moisturizing of the treatment area is recommended. This can include the use of a moisturizer “sandwich” where you apply the moisturizer both before and after the retinoid.
- If you do not experience irritation, you should gradually increase your use until you are able to use it every night. You should take nights off when necessary.
- Practice sun avoidance and regularly apply and reapply a mineral-based sunscreen containing zinc oxide and/or titanium dioxide with an SPF of at least 50.

Expected and Adverse Results

- Irritation is most likely to first occur approximately 3 days after initial application.
- Common signs of skin irritation include scaling, redness, itch, sting, and burning. This may be worsened by the combined application of other cosmetic agents.
- Your skin you may become more sensitive to the sun and burn more easily.
- No studies have been performed regarding the safety of topical retinoids during pregnancy or breast-feeding. It is recommended you avoid the use of retinoids if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or nursing.