

ON TOPIC | SKIN DEEP

cause and effect

Any number of ingredients can trigger inflammation—at times, a desired result, and at others, an unexpected occurrence, according to Karen Asquith, director of education at G.M. Collin Skincare. “Alpha hydroxy acids and retinols can cause inflammation, but when they’re used correctly, the controlled inflammation provides excellent results,” she says. Indeed, inflammation is the name of the retinoid game. While numerous treatment modalities rely on inflammation to minimize the signs of aging, one size definitely doesn’t fit all. “Active anti-aging ingredients need to be used in the correct dose, the correct delivery system, and the correct formulation to enhance results and not cause inflammation,” says DermAware’s Gül Ç. Zone. Control is the key word here, per Rhonda Allison’s Shannon Esau. Overuse of high-percentage AHAs and other acids can bring on chronic inflammation and cause damage to skin, she says. Microdermabrasion and chemical peels both create inflammation,

more superficial services like microblading, dermaplaning, microdermabrasion, and waxing, notes LightStim’s Amy Gardner. According to Clarins’s Genny Smith, most spa-based inflammation is due to overexposure to glycolic acid and peels. Goodwin concurs: “Virtually every type of acid in chemical peels triggers an inflammatory response, potentially intended to stimulate collagen production, repair elastin, or chemically break down skin cells,” he says. Then again, any active ingredient or acid can cause inflammation if not used correctly, says Sesha’s Phyllis Hsieh. Think too many layers of a certain peel, or too high a percentage of a particular ingredient. “One client’s skin may not be able to withstand a higher strength, while another client may be able to withstand stronger,” she says. Everyday items and ingredients, from harsh soaps and pre-

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As times have changed, so too have attitudes toward inflammation, and treatments that estheticians would’ve recommended as recently as a few years ago are no longer *de rigeur*. “Over the past 30 years or so, we’ve learned a great deal about inflammation, including the internal chronic low-grade inflammation we cannot see that is caused by genetic, lifestyle, and environmental factors,” says LightStim’s Amy Gardner. “Some treatments are specifically designed to elicit this response and trigger collagen production, which can be very effective. However, many experts now agree that it’s best to modulate inflammation to the extent that we can in order

to direct fibroblastic activity in the most productive way.” Overly aggressive treatments are out, according to Luzern’s Lisamarie Garguilo, as are aggressive post-procedure products with ingredients that don’t support the healing and reparative process. But as spas say goodbye to these outdated modalities, a crop of new therapies is popping up to take their place. “The list of new technologies and ingredients is extensive,” says G.M. Collin’s Karen Asquith. “Dermabrasion, for example, has been replaced in most practices with laser. It’s a constant evolution.” As a result, clients and estheticians alike have more tools at their disposal. ●