

Modern Beauty

In the quest to look our best, some things never change. We all want bright skin, healthy hair, and pearly teeth. But the options for achieving those goals have evolved.

We asked experts for the developments they're most excited about, from faster-acting formulas to gentler-than-ever treatments. Introducing the latest *and* greatest.

TEXT BY CLAIRE SULLIVAN



① BETTER CLEANSERS

THEN: Astringent suds that could leave your complexion dry and tight.

NOW: Nourishing washes that won't strip away skin's good oils. "Acids and harsh ingredients wound your skin barrier," says dermatologist Ellen Marmur, and that weakens its ability to retain moisture and deflect environmental pollutants. She suggests hypoallergenic **Doctor Rogers Restore Face Wash**, which contains moisturizing aloe and glycerin (\$42, doctorrogers.com). For an extra-gentle approach, try oils and balms that melt away dirt and makeup, but without causing breakouts. Two worth trying: **Tata Harper Cleansing Oil** and **Beautycounter Counter+ Lotus Glow Cleansing Balm** (\$82, tataharperskincare.com; \$72, beautycounter.com).

② SMOOTHER EXFOLIANTS

THEN: Abrasive physical scrubs or aggressive chemical versions that can cause redness and sensitivity.

NOW: Scrubs that get their gentle but effective grit from soft, dissolvable ingredients, like the fine sugars in **L'Oréal Paris Pure-Sugar Grapeseed Scrub** (\$13, lorealparisusa.com). As for chemical formulations, look for polyhydroxy acids (PHAs). "Unlike AHAs and BHAs, these molecules are bigger and can't penetrate as deeply into skin, so they slough off the most superficial layer without irritation," says Shereene Idriss. PHAs pack other benefits, too: They're humectants, so they retain moisture and can help reduce fine lines and pigmentation, says Dhaval Bhanusali. He recommends **Neostrata PHA Facial Cleanser** (\$36, neostrata.com).

③ WRINKLE REDUCERS

THEN: Retinols have reigned supreme for decades because they're proven to speed cell turnover. But they get flak for causing redness and irritation, and leaving skin more susceptible to sunburns.

NOW: "Slow-release formulas have made retinols much less sensitizing," says Steven Wang, which means it's easier to comply with nightly-use recommendations—and reap max benefits. They're also mild enough for the eye area. Try **Olay Regenerist Retinol 24 Night Eye Cream** (\$39, [olay.com](#)). Plant-based, pregnancy-safe alternatives have also arrived, says Idriss, who likes **Indeed Labs Bakuchiol Reface Pads** (\$20, [indeedlabs.com](#)).

④ SPOT STOPPERS

THEN: "It was hydroquinone or bust," says Bhanusali of the long-heralded lightening agent used to treat sun damage and uneven skin tones.

NOW: Enter topical tranexamic acid, which all the pros we interviewed like for its ability to block melanin and prevent patches from forming. Unlike hydroquinone, it's also safe for expecting mothers; Idriss used it to combat hormonal pigmentation during her pregnancy. Bhanusali recommends **SkinCeuticals Discoloration Defense** (\$98, [skinceuticals.com](#)). Other contenders include kojic acid (a mushroom derivative) and rice bran, long used in Asia for its brightening abilities; try it in **Tatcha The Rice Polish: Classic**, a creamy exfoliant (\$65, [tatcha.com](#)). To speed up the process, combine at-home goods with laser treatments such as Fraxel, which rev up collagen production; or microneedling, which does the same while also helping active ingredients penetrate your skin, says Wang.

OUR EXPERTS

New York City dermatologist **Dhaval Bhanusali**; NYC dermatologist **Shereene Idriss**; NYC dentist **Brian Kantor**; NYC dermatologist **Ellen Marmur**; and Basking Ridge, New Jersey, dermatologist **Steven Wang**.



⑤ FACIAL-FUZZ BUSTERS

THEN: Waxing (3, 2, 1... yow!), lasers, and intense chemical peels that can strip away healthy skin along with hair.

NOW: Dermaplaning. "It's gentler than waxing and threading, because the skin is prepped with steaming and conditioning," says Marmur. But bypass the DIY devices and leave this process to a pro: An aesthetician or dermatologist will carefully sweep a tiny blade over your face to remove fine hairs—and with them dead, dull skin cells. Another perk is increased product absorption; Marmur advises following a session with a soothing serum.

⑥ TOP-NOTCH TOOTH BRIGHTENERS

THEN: Professional bleaching, or mild whitening strips and pastes, some of which remove stains with enamel-damaging grit (ironically, that exposed enamel is extra-susceptible to yellowing).

NOW: The fastest payoff still comes from in-office treatments, but at-home bleaching products have improved. "You can find a higher concentration of hydrogen peroxide, the active lightening ingredient," says dentist Brian Kantor. The latest iteration of **Colgate Optic White Renewal toothpaste**, for example, polishes with an unprecedented 3 percent peroxide, but without the sensitivity of other formats, since you rinse it after two minutes of brushing (\$8.50, [walgreens.com](#)).

⑦ GENTLER HAIR CARE

THEN: Shampoos formulated with sulfates for daily lathering, rinsing, and repeating; conditioners that rely on silicones for shine.

NOW: One to three washes a week, if that. Water fades color and leaves hair vulnerable to damage by styling; overcleansing sends naturally occurring oils down the drain (frizz alert). If you love a good lather, **Tresemmé's Pro Pure Foam Shampoo** bubbles up without sulfates (\$6, [target.com](#)). For a refresh on off-days, grab **Dove Go Active Dry Shampoo Wipes**; they blot without leaving a speck of powder (\$5 for 5, [dove.com](#)). Among conditioners, natural alternatives to silicones are on the rise: Fatty acids from mango butter in **Aveda's Nutriplenish Leave-in** smooth on contact (\$37, [aveda.com](#)).

⑧ HAIR REPLENISHERS

THEN: Over-the-counter hair-loss treatments like Rogaine, or transplants.

NOW: Stress, hormonal changes, weight loss, and hereditary conditions are all potential culprits, but you'll want to see a dermatologist to get to the root of the matter. What you think is thinning could actually be breakage from cranking your hot tools up to 450 degrees or tearing through tangles as you brush. If that's the case, air-dry as often as possible, detangle carefully with a wide-tooth comb, and reach for a heat protectant like **Kérastase Genesis Défense Thermique Blow Dry Primer** before flipping on a dryer or iron (\$37, [kerastase.com](#)). For alopecia, a condition in which some follicles stop producing new strands, Rogaine remains the OTC choice. But platelet-rich plasma (PRP) is emerging as an alternative to transplants. A doctor processes a few vials of your blood through a machine to separate out plasma, and re-injects it into sparse areas on your scalp. The procedure takes 10 minutes, with no downtime. "Your natural proteins and platelets act like growth stimulants," says Marmur. The upshot: more, thicker hair.