



### ***Topical Retinoids for Anti-Aging***

Topical retinoids contain vitamin A and are prepared for use on the skin. Its benefits cannot be obtained from vitamin pills or other sources of vitamin A. Topical retinoids treat acne, sun damage and other skin conditions.

- Two Important Facts:**
1. The benefits may take months to appear. Be patient!
  2. They can irritate the skin, especially when first used. Redness and scaling is not the goal of therapy!

#### **General Instructions**

Topical retinoids are available through several different manufacturers and include the following: Retin A, Renova, Differin, Avita, Tazorac, Avage and the generic formulation, topical tretinoin. They are available in white creams and clear gels. Most are available in different strengths (0.025% to 0.1%).

A pea sized amount is usually enough to cover the face. Dab it on and smooth it in. It is usually applied at bedtime to dry skin. A moisturizing cream can be used before or after the application especially if your skin is easily irritated. Your moisturizing cream should be fragrance free and non-comedogenic.

Redness, itching and/or scaling are signs of over use. If your skin becomes irritated, it will get red and peel. If this happens, you should apply the product every other night. You also may need to avoid sensitive areas like near the corners of your mouth, around your eyes, or on your neck. You, also, should avoid astringents (such as rubbing alcohol), abrasives (rough sponges), and harsh soaps (deodorant soaps). Soap free cleansers such as Aquanil, Cereve and Cetaphil are best or use cleansing lotions for sensitive skin. If the irritation continues, skip treatments until the irritation subsides. If you can't work up to regular use within one or two months, ask your doctor for a milder form of topical retinoid.

#### **There are two other things you should know about topical retinoids:**

1. They may make you slightly more sensitive to the sun. You should be able to use it throughout the summer, providing you avoid excess sun or use sunscreens.
2. Female patients who are pregnant or breast feeding should not use topical retinoids.
3. Hair removal by waxing (i.e. eyebrows, upperlip) should be avoided while using retinoids.

#### **Topical Retinoids for Treating Sun-Damaged Skin:**

Topical retinoids can, over time, reduce fine wrinkles, blend mottled skin, and smooth the skin's rough texture. It also may prevent or delay some pre-cancerous growths. However, it will not help deep wrinkles and it is certainly not a treatment for skin cancer. Many people are able to benefit from the effect of topical retinoids with only 3 applications per week. Expectations of treatment should be realistic. It is better to consider topical retinoids as a preventative measure, like taking an aspirin a day. You should also continue regular use of a sunscreen.