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Brayden Olson

Everything you need to know about exfoliating

**Have we been doing it
all wrong?!**

By: landon peoples — March 13, 2015

By now, we've given you the rundown on **serums**, **cleansers**, and even **eyelashes**—but the exfoliation step in your beauty routine is just as crucial. And while some find this part of the process rather tedious (or worse, optional), others (like myself) consider it the best part. Nothing excites me more than sloughing away dead skin cells from my face. So just to make sure I'm doing this right, I decided to speak with **Dr. Jody Levine, NYC-based dermatologist and AOB Med Spa National Director**, on how to properly exfoliate, the pros and cons of exfoliating, and which exfoliators I should be using now.

My experience with exfoliators has had ups and downs. Some of them dry out my skin so badly it feels like I'm a rattle-snake, whereas others give me such a glow you'd think I was pregnant.



I stopped using my Clarisonic, for example, when my dermatologist told me studies showed it creates micro-tears in your skin every time you use it. But sometimes even those top shelf microdermabrasion tools don't even do the trick, which can be quite the paradox (and make quite the dent in the wallet).

When I talked to **Dr. Levine**, I learned the exfoliation process is more complicated than I thought. **"Cleansing beforehand will prevent you from scrubbing oil, dirt, and residue into your pores. As skin renews itself when you sleep, I recommend exfoliating in the morning to help slough away dead skin cells that accumulated overnight. Always moisturize after exfoliation, as it can strip the skin of its natural oils,"** Levine explained. When we cheat our skin of its natural moisture, that can cause overcompensation, which means excessive amounts of sebum that can clog our pores we just tried ever-so-earnestly to refine.

And unfortunately, over-exfoliation is another consequence of improper skin renewing techniques that's an easy crime to commit. It's important to remember that exfoliation actually happens naturally as our skin cells are born in the lowest layer of our epidermis and work their way up. As we age, though, this process tends to slow down—hence the transition from "youth preservation" products to "anti-aging" products. The negative effects of over-exfoliating are pretty daunting: **"Vigorous exfoliation can cause irritation and redness, driving bacteria and fungus into your pores. At home, daily chemical exfoliation with a gentle exfoliating acid is appropriate but mechanical exfoliation with scrubs should be performed one to two times weekly. A stronger, in-office treatment can be performed monthly."**

So it's safe to say how often you exfoliate and your exfoliant's ingredients are vital. Personally, I like to stick to those most natural in composition.

Fresh's Sugar Face Polish

(\$62) is sort of ridiculous in the sense that it almost gives you a reason to forego the rest of your beauty routine because it does everything you need: It cleanses, exfoliates, hydrates, and brightens using brown sugar, grapeseed oil, and—get this—strawberry seeds. And, of course,

the next best thing is the good old DIY face scrub. Stick to the tried and trues like baking soda, sugar, oatmeal, and sea salt as your base ingredients to mix with an oil of your choice. I'm a huge fan of lavender oil—it calms down any exfoliation-induced irritation and redness almost instantly and scales down those little bumps that like to hang out along our cheeks and chin. Some alternatives to oils are **Avène's Thermal**

Spring Water (\$12.50), or for you serum-lovers out there, try **LIFTLAB's LIFT + FIX Serum** (\$110) for its anti-inflammation and redness reducing properties.



But if any of the above seems too good to be true (or just too damn complicated), click through the slideshow to find our roundup of the 10 best exfoliators to try. Remember to pay attention to the parts that matter (ingredients, texture) and ignore the things that don't (brand, price). Because if one thing's certain, there's no better cure to a face of fatigue than scrubbing away the scraps and starting all over again.

Best exfoliators to try:

