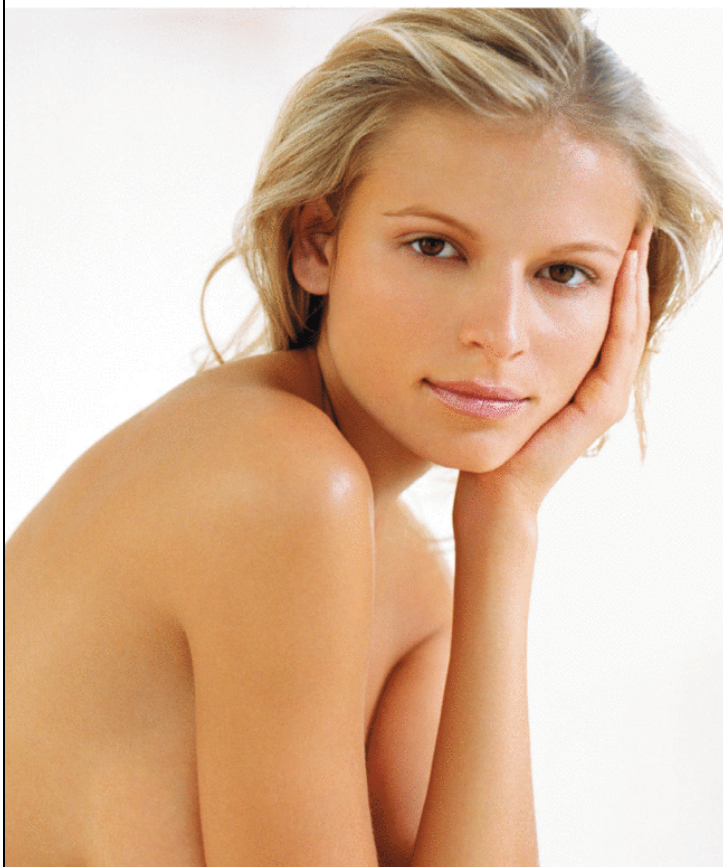


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Glorious Glow

Today's alpha hydroxy acids may be the key to giving your clients the results they desire.

"AHAs are ideal for use in spa treatments, as they both **exfoliate** and **hydrate** the skin."

ALTHOUGH THE SPA INDUSTRY IS CONSTANTLY evolving, what hasn't changed is the growing popularity of anti-aging treatments. The eternal quest for the fountain of youth remains a top priority for many spa-goers. Alpha hydroxy acids (AHA), a group of chemical compounds derived from fruit, milk, and sugar, have proven to be a key weapon in the fight against aging and have long been touted for their ability to smooth fine lines, unclog pores, refine texture, and improve the overall condition of the skin. "AHAs have been used as an exfoliation technique dating back to the era of Cleopatra and the use of milk baths," says Aneta Merlino, spa manager at **The Spaahh** at Hotel 1000 (Seattle),

where a Glycolic Peel Facial (\$115, 60 minutes) and a Glycolic Peel Add-on (\$20) are staples of the menu. Today, no spa menu is complete without at least one AHA-based service incorporating fruit, glycolic, lactic, or other available acids that treat a variety of skin conditions.

According to dermatologist Craig Austin, M.D., AHAs are ideal for use in spa treatments, as they both exfoliate and hydrate the skin. Julia Hunter, M.D., dermatologist and founder of **Skin-Fitness Plus** (Beverly Hills, CA), is a fan of acids that exfoliate in a healthy manner. "I love lactic, malic, and tartaric acids, as the body has receptors for these chemicals," says Hunter. "Therefore, it recognizes them and creates positive, not negative, effects." For instance, the Bioelements Lactic-Plus Peel (\$115, 60 minutes) at **Sister's Skin Care and Waxing** (Chicago) smooths fine lines and wrinkles, improves dull and lifeless skin, and restores elasticity. Ideal for thick skin, the treatment can be customized five different ways to create a mild to ultimate peeling-strength action.

Glycolic, the most popular of all acids, generates its fair share of debate. Because it doesn't have a receptor in the body and can trigger inflammation, Hunter isn't a fan. In fact, she cautions that glycolic acid should never be used on thin, dry, and mature skin because it can cause telangiectasia, also known as dilated blood vessels of the skin. For others, glycolic is the acid of choice. "I think glycolic acid is the best because it is the smallest molecule and can penetrate the skin more easily than other AHAs, such as lactic or malic acid," says Austin. "Glycolic acid also attracts water, so it not only exfoliates but also hydrates and rejuvenates the skin."

At the **Spa at Alderbrook** at Alderbrook Resort & Spa (Union, WA), guests can opt for either the Resurface "C" Facial (\$160, 90 minutes), which includes a 40 percent glycolic peel combined with vitamin C, or the Age Renewal Treatment Peel Facial (\$160, 90 minutes), which involves a lactic acid-based peel combined with Idebenone, a potent antioxidant. "Generally, most guests have something they would love to improve about their skin," says spa director Elizabeth Russell. "Whether they are looking to address fine lines and wrinkles, dullness, or a general loss of firmness to the skin, a series of alpha hydroxy treatments is a perfect way

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PHOTOGRAPHY: JEROME TISNE/GETTY IMAGES

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for many to begin addressing those issues.” And for guests who are short on time, the spa offers a Glycolic Peel (\$25, 15 minutes) add-on for the face and/or décolleté to any 60-minute facial.

Despite the popularity of fruit acid, glycolic acid, lactic acid, and more, AHAs sometimes get a bad rap for their potential to cause irritation and sensitivity to the sun. This is especially common in acids with a lower pH balance, which have been proven to absorb more readily into the skin on account of their higher acidity. Because AHAs have the potential to irritate sensitive skin, products are often diluted to change the pH. Unfortunately, this can also impact their effectiveness. “Alpha hydroxy acids that have been buffered to relieve some of the stinging properties are essentially rendered useless because they are no longer an acid,” says Jonith Y. Breadon, M.D. of **Aesthetic Dermatology & Laser Surgery** (Chicago). “This is common in a lot of over-the-counter products.” Offering AHA-based treatments by trained professionals who know how to evaluate the skin and choose the proper concentration and strength not only provides spa-goers with better results but also minimizes the risks associated with highly acidic products.

“At the **Spa at SageCliffe** (Quincy, WA), we utilize The Alpha Plus Gel by Decléor, which has a pH level of 3 to 3.5,” says spa director Angi Dooley.



“The lower the product’s pH level, the higher the exfoliating and brightening effect of the alpha hydroxy acid. The gel leaves the skin more radiant, eliminates skin imperfections, reduces the appearance of wrinkles, and diminishes pigmentation.”

Unfortunately, pigmentation can be an issue, particularly when dealing with sensitive skin. “There are no specific AHAs to avoid altogether, however, you should use caution with the lower pH products because a spot burn is possible,” says Oscar Hevia, M.D., a dermatologist based in Coral

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“Alpha hydroxy acids, derived from **fruit, milk, and sugar**, have proven to be a **key weapon** in the fight against aging.”

Acid Wash

Reveal skin in all its glory with these effective and refining alpha hydroxy acid-based products.

Bioelements Quick Refiner: A younger looking complexion can be had thanks to this lightweight liquid gel, which includes a mix of glycolic and multi-fruit acids. It works by chemically dissolving dead surface cells, unclogging pores, and visibly reducing the appearance of fine lines. (800) 433-6650; www.bioelements.com.

Éminence Organic Skin Care Radish Seed Refining Peel: This mild and hypo-allergenic exfoliant peel uses detoxifying herbal extracts to improve the skin’s

texture. Whole grain oat cleanses the skin while lemon balm disinfects and purifies and willow bark calms and soothes. (888) 747-6342; www.eminenceorganics.com.

GlyMed Plus AHA Accelerator: This revolutionary lightweight serum contains two natural alpha hydroxy acids—glycolic and lactic acid. Oil-free and water-based, it is specially formulated to prep skin for chemical and surgical procedures as well as an ideal treatment for acne, photo-aged skin, and hyperpigmentation. (800) 676-9667; www.glymedplus.com.

Guinot Beauté Neuve Radiance Renewal Cream: Fortified with gentle fruit acids,

this nourishing cream provides a visible peeling effect that encourages new skin. It also includes vitamin E to fight free radicals and natural pigments to protect against UV rays. (800) 523-1030; www.guinotusa.com.

Jan Marini Skin Research Bioglycolic Facial Cleanser: This soap-free, non-irritating cleanser incorporates glycolic acid to help refine the skin’s texture. It also contains sorbitol, a natural humectant that comes from berries, to leave skin soft and hydrated. (800) 347-2223; www.janmarini.com.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: SHUTTERSTOCK

“Although there is no shortage of AHA products on the market today, the wealth of benefits they have to offer still remain a mystery to some spa-goers.”

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Gables, FL. “This occurs when, after the AHA is applied on the face, it is not neutralized sufficiently with water, creating a localized area of pigmentation that can take weeks, or longer, to fade.”

At **Eau Spa** at The Ritz-Carlton Palm Beach (FL), spa director Amal Elbahnasawy recommends La Therapie HydraPeel Facial (\$200, 50 minutes) for those looking to treat aging, hyperpigmented, and sun-damaged skin. According to her, unbuffered glycolic, available in either a 35 percent or 50 percent level, can offer immediate results. “Using galvanic stimuli, the active ingredients are propelled into the deepest surface layers of the skin, helping to remineralize and rehydrate beyond the surface,” says Elbahnasawy.

At **Spa 101** at the Hilton Bentley (Miami Beach, FL), the AHA Fruit Pulp Peeling Treatment (\$120, 50 minutes) works to prevent and treat existing blemishes by clearing clogged pores. According to owner and spa director Iris Van de Coevering, it’s also ideal for treating hyperpigmentation. “It is one of the few peels that can be used here in our sunny climate,” she says. “We use it only in combination with sunblock.”

The Glow Zone Facial (\$180, 80 minutes) at **Face to Face NYC** (New York City) also helps get skin squeaky clean. “The first part of the facial is about removing unwanted debris using alpha

hydroxy acid and plenty of extractions,” says owner Enrique Ramirez. “The second part is to bring moisture and balance back with a seaweed mask that nourishes the skin.”

Although there is no shortage of AHA products on the market today, the wealth of benefits they have to offer still remain a mystery to some spa-goers. “Many people have heard about the use of AHAs but are unaware of their potential benefits,” says Dooley. “Many of our clients have used an over-the-counter AHA product that has irritated their skin and are sometimes reluctant to try a professional AHA treatment.” The key is to put their minds at ease by fully explaining the treatment. According to Elbahnasawy, spa-goers are always eager to learn more about what will benefit their skin.

With consumers watching their hard-earned dollars like never before, it’s important to offer them treatments that provide visible results. Spas that incorporate AHA-based treatments into their menus are well poised to do just that. “AHA treatments not only provide lasting results with a combination of in-spa and at-home care, but they will also give people that instant boost for a smoother and more radiant complexion,” says Russell. And everyone knows that a glowing clientele is always good for the bottom line.—*Heather Mikesell*

Acid Wash (continued)

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Klapp ASA Peel Care Cream: Designed to fight the visible effects of aging, this potent cream features a blend of alpha hydroxy acids, including citric, glycolic, lactic, malic, salicylic, and tartaric acids. (888) 455-2778; www.klapp-usa-shop.com.

Nature Pure Revitalizing Cream: A combination of alpha hydroxy acids helps this cream soften and smooth the skin. It also contains glycolic fruit acid, which is found naturally in sugar cane. (866) 640-SKIN; www.naturepure.com.

Platinum Skin Care Glycolic Serum 15: This non-comedogenic serum helps

accelerate the removal of dead skin, reduces fine lines, and increases collagen production thanks to the addition of glycolic acid. (800) 917-3155; www.platinumskincare.com.

Priori AHA Gentle Facial Cleanser: Ideal for removing makeup, this gentle cleanser features the LCA Complex, a combination of lactic acid and skin essential vitamins. (800) 419-8783; www.prioriskincare.com.

Sanitas Skincare Glycolic Citrus Cleanser: This stimulating cleanser is formulated with glycolic acid to exfoliate the skin while removing dirt, oil, and makeup. It also includes hyaluronic acid,

which helps soften the skin. (888) 855-8425; www.sanitas-skincare.com.

Skin 2 Skin Aging Intervention Cream: Packed with age-repairing properties, this face cream includes alpha lipoic acid, which causes less photosensitivity and irritation than other alpha hydroxy acids. (877) 754-6790; www.skin2skincare.com.

Sonya Dakar BODY by SONYA DAKAR Daily Wash: This body wash relies on lactic acid to provide a gentle exfoliating effect. Formulated for daily use, it also includes an organic Omega-3 Complex and vitamin B5 to nourish the skin. (877) 72-SONYA; www.sonyadakar.com.—*H.M.*