



# micro miracles

AMINO ACIDS PERFORM MYRIAD FUNCTIONS IN THE BODY AND THE POTENTIAL FOR USE IN TOPICAL SKINCARE IS GAINING CREDIBILITY.

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If you were literally to consider your body a temple, amino acids would be the clay that makes up the bricks from which it is built. I suppose I could also use the simile of the body as a structure made from Lego, but I'm a girl and frankly, the temple imagery appeals a great deal more.

Amino acids are the smallest of bodily building blocks that join to form peptides and then proteins, which are in turn used throughout the body for everything from making cells to enabling neurochemical activity in the brain. Combined, these wonders of nature contain all the elements to create life: hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur.

There are 20 amino acids the human body needs, nine of which must be ingested as a part of your diet as they can't be synthesised by the body. The others are conditionally essential, which means they can be created within the body if your diet is inadequate. Unlike fat and starch, the body can't store amino acids for a rainy day, so your diet has to be balanced and consistent if you intend to stay healthy.

In terms of skincare, topically applied amino acids serve several purposes. In most cases, they act as water-binding agents, keeping your skin plump, fresh and perfectly hydrated. Other amino acids have been shown to operate as antioxidants, stabilising damaging free radicals by donating an oxygen molecule to them, and still others have a positive effect on wound healing. Here are some products that harness their therapeutic potential.



## Cleanse

If your skin is dry you need to use a cleanser that thoroughly cleans without stripping, to help maintain moisture levels.

Pevonia Botanica Myoxy-Caviar Timeless Balm Cleanser, \$78.50, is a creamy formulation containing natural amino acids extracted from apples, which foams on contact with water and is designed to purify and cleanse without disrupting the skin's hydrolipidic film (the protective layer which keeps out unwanted bacteria).

## Treat

After cleansing, apply a few drops of a serum. Which serum you opt for will depend entirely on your skin's particular needs. The role of amino acids in serums and treatments varies: mostly they deliver active ingredients to the second layer of the skin where the connective tissue made up of collagen and elastin is located.

Neova skincare products deliver copper molecules to this heavily guarded layer of the skin. Elemental copper is known for its healing and protective properties. In terms of anti-ageing, copper repairs skin tissue by enabling the formation of cross-links in collagen and elastin. This means plumper, younger looking skin with fewer wrinkles.

Problems arise because of the size of the copper molecule – it's just too big to penetrate the top layer of the skin. The Neova range utilises a tripeptide delivery system to sneak the copper past the protective upper layers. Neova Antioxidant Serum, \$119, uses a specific chain of amino acids called glycyl-L-histidyl-L-lysine that binds the copper molecule to protect and deliver it directly to the dermis. The serum also contains a luscious concoction of antioxidants and humectants to protect and moisturise your skin.



An anti-ageing treatment rich in amino acids (and a favourite among celebrities including Madonna, Kylie Minogue, Jessica Alba and Charlize Theron) is Yon-Ka Mésonium duo pack, \$116. This is perfect for use as an overnight treatment, although for faster and more dramatic results you can use it twice a day.



The pack contains two vials, one with an oil-based formula and the other water-based. The combined formula contains 24 amino acids, nourishing essential oils and a host of antioxidants to repair and protect damaged or dry skin. Read the instructions carefully and play around with the suggested methods to find out what works best for your skin. It's recommended as a pre and post-surgery treatment as it speeds up the rate of healing.

For firming and toning, try Skin Nutrition Nutrimax Under Moisturiser Treatment, \$102. It utilises dimethylaminoethanol (DMAE) and amino acid tyrosine, along with glycolic acid and Vitamin E to improve the skin's tone and texture. As the name would suggest, apply a thin layer to cleansed skin both in the morning and the evening, wait a few minutes for it to be absorbed and then apply a moisturiser.



Alpha-H Liquid Gold Daily Poly-Oxidant Complex with SkinLiftingPeptides, \$79.95, is a light serum rich in soy peptides that stimulate the growth of collagen, elastin and keratin. These combine with tetrapeptides (long peptide chains) to boost skin's repair mechanisms and leaving it looking smooth and healthy.

Kiehl's High Potency Skin Firming Concentrate, \$100, is formulated with oligo peptides which are said to improve the firmness and elasticity of the skin. Enriched with hyaluronic acid to moisturise and natural honey (known for its healing and antibacterial properties), it's perfect for smoothing and strengthening skin on the face, neck and décolletage.



Skin isn't the only part of the body which can benefit from treatments rich in amino acids, peptides and proteins. Redken Extreme Anti-Snap Leave-in Treatment, \$26, is a godsend for people like me who were blessed with less than durable tresses, prone to breakage and split ends. It's packed with proteins made up of many amino acids which strengthen brittle hair and rid you of those wispy bits after you brush.

## Moisturise

Some of you will find that a serum provides enough moisture on its own (especially on hot sticky summer days) but for those with dry skin finishing up with a moisturiser is a must. For especially dry or mature skin, try Dr Spiller Biocosmetic Silk Complex, \$269. This luscious cream contains silk peptides to strengthen and repair slackened skin, and it actually feels like silk as it glides across your skin – pure heaven.



For younger dehydrated skin, try Skeyndor Essential Hydratant Cream with amino acids, \$49.95. It's a good example of amino acids acting as both pH regulators and moisture-binding agents. The cream acts on both the top and middle layers of the skin, entering the second layer via a special delivery system as well as building up the protective barrier on the skin's surface. bella