

Me as a Skin Cream Guinea Pig

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For a long time I received spam “anti-aging” emails. The barrage seemed to double after my ‘do not send’ efforts. Then it stopped. Maybe they saw my picture and decided I was hopeless. I hoped that the FDA crackdown on companies making anti-aging claims for cosmetics might have had an effect, but Google still comes up with 11 million results in 0.60 seconds.

I always wondered about the verity of skin cream claims. A respected dermatologist told me more than ten years ago that glycolic acid was the only additive proven to repair damaged skin. Newer products make claims that a smattering of studies suggest might have validity. But only a few of them are well-designed science that earn believability.

Because there are so few well-done studies, I decided I would do my own. On me. After all, I certainly have damaged skin that needs help – I slathered on baby oil and baked in the sun throughout my teenage years and failed to use sun screen during most of my outdoor active sports years.

With only one subject, it’s not great science, but at least I compared a variety of products to a placebo and no treatment. I picked four products to apply nightly for one month, to see if any made a difference.

Methods: Each product contained an ingredient that is promoted as “anti-aging.” 1) Hylamide, a liquid that contains hyaluronic acid and is applied with a medicine dropper, went on the right side of my face and neck. 2) I applied CeraVe Moisturizing Lotion, containing ceramides and a little hyaluronic acid, to my left arm. 3) My left leg received Olay Regenerist Advanced Anti-aging Wrinkle Revolution Complex, with niacinamide and tea and yeast extracts. 4) The right leg was washed with NIP+FAB Glycolic Fix Cleanser, consisting of olive oil, apple amino acid and 2% glycolic acid.

For comparison, I used a basic moisturizing cream, Eucerin Intensive Repair, on my left face and neck, and absolutely nothing on my right arm. All the products contained A LOT of different ingredients, including

glycerin, fats, oils, waxes, alcohols, chemicals and preservatives, so I wasn’t testing individual ingredients, just different products. I also refused to invest a huge amount of money in them: My total cost was less than \$100.

Results: I’ve included before and after pictures, which has taken some serious setting aside of the ego. I washed off each product immediately before the picture. My apologies for different lighting in the pictures – It makes it difficult to compare unless one looks for specific landmarks and wrinkles.

My right, no treatment arm stayed dry and sun-damaged, while CeraVe made the wrinkles on my left arm look better while it was on. However, any differences disappeared when I washed it off.

The only product that produced dramatic results was the glycolic acid wash, which turned my skin into something from a horror film – white scales everywhere. Glycolic acid is supposed to be an exfoliant and wash away dead skin, but it seemed to lift mine into scales that stayed put. This was the only product I stopped early. I’ll do a lot for science, but having mismatched legs, one looking like Freddy Krueger, went too far.



Right leg, pre- and post-glycolic acid cleaner

Oil of Olay didn’t come through for my left leg. The moisturizing properties made it look better while it was

on (not shown), but once it was washed away the skin itself was no different. It still just looked old.



Left leg, pre- and post-Olay Regenerist lotion

Speaking of mismatched body parts, I did wonder how my face would look if the Hylamide transformed my right face into age 23 and the Eucerin didn't. Secretly, I was rooting for the Hylamide, but, alas, the only difference was an oily, sticky feel each morning on the Eucerin, side.



Left face, pre- and post-Eucerin lotion



Right face, pre- and post-Hylamide

Overall I did see that moisturizing helped the skin to look better from a distance, even if the laxity and

furrows persisted up close. I'm continuing to moisturize with the left-over creams.

The possible reasons for my negative results are many: They don't work; or My sun-damaged skin is too far gone for remedial help; or An anti-aging product should be individualized, and I picked the wrong one for me; or I didn't apply enough; or The level of special ingredients was enough to say they were in the product, but inadequate for results; or I didn't spend enough to get a really good product.

After all, I could have spent \$10,000 for a face cream containing stem cell extracts. Or \$1000 to \$3000 for a cream containing sea proteins from caviar in a diamond-studded cream pot covered with 2400 Swarovski crystals, marine algae in futurist vials or platinum. I found no data that applying these ingredients to skin accomplishes anything.

Conclusion: My experience with these creams verifies that I should avoid wasting money on anti-aging creams. My results are not necessarily those of someone else.

Reading independent product reviews on the net suggests that many others have had the same experience as I anti-aging efforts. But there *are* those glowing reviews that revive hope...

I'm sure that my failure won't stop people who truly want to believe. The hope of those who searched for the Fountain of Youth was always that they would be the one for whom the effort paid off.

Who knows if skin aging reversal is possible? I'm content with moisturizing, being proud that my crow's feet were earned and knowing that the aged, sun-damaged skin was acquired during fantastic vacations and rewarding athletic endeavors. ¶

*The wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind.*

*From The Fountain,
by William Wordsworth*