



# In With The New

Karen Alfonso details what skincare experts think will be the buzziest skincare ingredients in 2026

Last year, barrier care became paramount in our skincare routines, and lip balms became more than just a salve that soothed chapped lips – they were an accessory, a status symbol (Rhode lip balms, anyone?), even our emotional support. Here's what skincare experts

think will be the buzziest skincare ingredients this year...

### Growth Factors

"In dermatology, growth factors are naturally occurring proteins that signal the skin to repair itself," says Dr Nidhi Singh Tandon, founder of The Skin Art Clinic, Lucknow. She explains that, while they are applied topically, they don't add collagen directly

but rather act as biological messengers, encouraging fibroblasts (a type of biological cell) to produce new collagen, elastin, and hyaluronic acid.

Growth factors are not for everyone, however: "They are most beneficial for patients in their 30s to 50s with early signs of ageing, fine wrinkles, dullness, or mild laxity," Dr Nidhi reveals. "They are also valuable in

recovery after dermatological procedures such as microneedling or fractional lasers, where controlled micro-injury allows growth factors to penetrate and accelerate repair."

The best way to incorporate growth factors into your routine is by layering them under a sunscreen and antioxidant such as vitamin C in the morning. At night, they might be alternated with retinoids – retinol one night, growth factors the next – to balance stimulation with recovery.

### Ectoin

Ectoin is a naturally-occurring molecule derived from extremophile microorganisms that survive in harsh environments such as deserts and salt lakes. Dr Bindu Stalekar, MD (Skin) and Founder & Medical Director – Skin Smart Solutions Mumbai, explains: "In skincare, ectoin functions as a stress-protection molecule, forming a hydration shield around skin cells," she explains. "What makes it particularly relevant today is its ability to protect skin from modern aggressors, pollution, UV exposure, blue light, temperature extremes, and chronic inflammation, all of which are increasingly impacting Indian skin."

Indian women often face skincare issues owing to external aggressors such as pollution, UV exposure, blue light, temperature extremes, and chronic inflammation, all of which are increasingly impacting Indian skin. What makes ectoin particularly useful is that it works by stabilising cell membranes and proteins, reducing

transepidermal water loss, calming inflammation, and strengthening the skin barrier at a cellular level.

### PDRN

While PDRN might have gained popularity last year, 2026 will really take it

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—DR NIDHI SINGH TANDON



Bioderma Photoderm Aquefluide

The Ordinary The Growth Factors 15% Serum

centre stage. We're already seeing it in K-Beauty treatments and products, and it even entered pop culture lexicon thanks to Kim Kardashian admitting she gets salmon sperm facials, aka PDRN, to keep her skin glowing. "Purified and extracted DNA fragments from salmon fish sperm cells are called polydeoxyribonucleotides, or 'salmon DNA,'" explains Dr Siddhi Tiwari, MD, DNB, of The White Door India Spa, Mumbai.

She adds that PDRN has shown promise as a skin anti-ageing agent due to its qualities that boost skin cell activity, encourage the development of new collagen and blood vessels, and exhibit anti-inflammatory, anti-pigmentary, soft tissue regeneration, skin priming, and revitalisation characteristics.

"Essentially, what PDRN does is help activate adenosine A2A receptors (found near the brain and immune cells) and that promotes natural DNA recycling processes," she elaborates. "This substance works with the skin's biology rather than by concealing issues, which is why results appear natural and continue to get better over time."

For optimal results, she adds that PDRN performs best when applied on the skin via fractional CO2 laser channels, microneedling, or precise microinjections, which act as micro-doorways for targeted absorption with little downtime. ■

