

# BEAUTY & BRAINS

## beauty contest

Two ways to win at improving skin texture

### SCRUB-PEELS

These new exfoliants remove dead, dry, and damaged skin using chemicals (fruit or alpha hydroxy acids) and light abrasion. Until now, the products have been difficult to formulate because the acids can break down the abrasive particles and the particles caused the acids to become unstable, says Audrey Kunin, M.D., the formulator-founder of **DermaDoctor Physical Chemistry** (\$75, [www.dermadoctor.com](http://www.dermadoctor.com)). She solved the problem, like many companies, by using nonreactive polyethylene beads. Here they're in a chemical broth of glycolic, lactic, azelaic, and beta hydroxy acids and calming green tea. Los Angeles facialist Kate Somerville created **Kate-in-a-Jar** (\$85, [www.katesomerville.com](http://www.katesomerville.com)) as an at-home facial for her clients. It's a potent formula of papain and bromelain, the exfoliating enzymes in papaya and pineapple. The peel's forest green color is a surprise, as is the short time it takes to work: 30 seconds. **Actifirm Z-Peel Plus** (\$83, [www.actifirm.com](http://www.actifirm.com)) uses a "smart enzyme" from the *Mucor meihei* mushroom, which dissolves only dead cells and deactivates when the skin changes pH, a natural occurrence after exfoliation, so there's no risk of overdoing it. Polyethylene beads sweep away the dead cells. **MD Formulations Face and Body Scrub** (\$35, [www.mdformulations.com](http://www.mdformulations.com)) uses polyethylene granules and a strong shot of glycolic acid in a light-lathering cream base. The company recommends it as a pre-self-tanning treatment.



### BARRIER-REPAIR TREATMENTS



These products succor skin prone to extreme dryness and flaking, red patches and bumps, or eczema-like cracking—all signs of an impaired skin barrier. The skin's top layer (stratum corneum) is made up of lipids such as fatty acids, ceramides, and cholesterol, and **Osmotics Cream Extreme** (\$75, [www.osmotics.com](http://www.osmotics.com)) uses a cosmetic version of them, plus petrolatum, lanolin, and glycerin, to provide an immediate protective seal. The formula was patented by dermatologists at UC San Francisco. Pro-Niacin, a skin-penetrating molecule made with niacin, is the hero ingredient in **Nia 24 Skin Strengthening Complex** (\$85, [www.nia24.com](http://www.nia24.com) for spas). Besides addressing the symptoms named above, it can mitigate the effects of irritation from other skin treatments, says the molecule's co-creator, Myron Jacobson, a professor of medicinal chemistry at the University of Arizona. Another inside-out approach is **Remergent Barrier Repair Formula** (\$95, [www.remergentskin.com](http://www.remergentskin.com)), which uses liposomes (fat-based envelopes) to deliver ursolic acid, amino acids, and retinol deep into the skin, where they boost lipid production and moisture levels and slow destructive enzymes such as elastase and MMPs. A botanical antidote to rough skin is preservative-free **Trilogy Certified Organic Rosehip Oil** (\$20, [www.lafcony.com](http://www.lafcony.com)), which is high in fatty acids and antioxidant beta-carotene and lycopene. It absorbs quickly, like a serum.