



**FOR YOUR  
INFORMATION**

# Alpha Hydroxy Acids

**Alpha Hydroxy Acid** is the family name for a variety of active acids. The most commonly used are glycolic, lactic, malic, tartaric, and citric acid. AHA's have exfoliating and emollient properties. Topical applications seem to have specific effects on the corneum layer, the epidermis, and the dermis. AHA's are a popular choice as prime ingredients for many acne preparations due to the effect they have on micro comedones (an impaction of cells that build up in the follicular wall). AHA's reduce actinic keratosis (rough areas of sun damaged skin) and improve the appearance of aging skin.

**Glycolic Acid** comes from sugar cane. It is being used in strengths ranging from 5% to 70%. Strengths above 35% should be used only by physicians, and many are recognizing the safe benefits of lower strengths. Glycolic Acid is believed to cause repair and regeneration of the skin more effectively than other AHA's due to the small molecule, which allows for rapid penetration. Glycolic Acid loosens the intercellular cement that binds the cells together causing skin cells to slough. It is believed that glycolic acid binds water to the stratum corneum and moisture of course creates healthier, plumper skin tissue.

**Salon Treatments** are available for progressive skin care and requires weekly treatments initially for approximately six to eight weeks. An appropriate home care is recommended to enhance results. Glycolic acid is not for everyone (people can be allergic to strawberries and milk). If you are one of the many that can use Glycolic the benefits can far surpass Retin A.

**Lactic Acid** is an AHA that is derived from sour milk. It is used as an exfoliant and for moisture retention. Lactic acid is found in the body in blood and muscle tissue and is a component of the skins natural moisturizing factor. Lactic acid can often times be tolerated better than glycolic acid. This is partly due to the source of each (milk being less irritating than a fruit acid) and since lactic acid is found in our bodies and glycolic is not, the skin may be more receptive and not see it as a foreign substance. Investigations report that continuous use of lactic acid (5%-12%) provide mild to moderate improvement in fine wrinkling and softer, smoother skin. Treatments are available for progressive skin care in a similar fashion to glycolic acid. Often a combination of glycolic and lactic acid is used together to enhance results. This must be decided on an individual basis according to the skin's needs and how it responds.

**Malic Acid and Tartaric Acid** are beneficial for firming and toning and Citric acid is an antioxidant and astringent. A blending of all of these AHA's in the appropriate strengths can be exactly what some skins respond to best.

If you are on a weekly professional treatment plan and develop a rash or unusual discomfort (the skin can feel sensitive and tender during this time), discontinue use of any acid home care and call your professional immediately. Avoid the sun during your treatments and wear a sunscreen daily. Do not use harsh scrubs or highly perfumed skin care. Be sure to advise your therapist of any health conditions and medications. If you are pregnant or lactating, are currently on accutane, or are using Retin A (must be off Retin A for two weeks), you are not a candidate for professional AHA treatments.

