

BEAUTY

# I tried No7's sell-out Future Renew serum. This is my honest review

Claire Coleman reveals the truth about the brand's hyped new release — and the results are surprising



"I believe this could actually be a product that justifies the hullabaloo surrounding it," says Claire Coleman  
JOHN GODWIN

Claire Coleman | Wednesday April 12 2023, 2:00pm, The Times

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**W**hen it comes to skincare, there is one product that everyone is talking about this week — the new offering from the No7 range at Boots. The serum promises to improve skin with two new scientifically proven ingredients and offers a wealth of research to show it works. When the product, called Future Renew, went on sale this morning, the Boots website crashed as thousands of eager shoppers joined a queue to buy it, with waiting times of over an hour to get it into their shopping basket.

Fifteen years in the making, the product is being fêted in the same way the brand's cult Protect & Perfect serum was back in 2007, when the BBC's *Horizon* showed it had a proven ability to reduce wrinkles and fine lines, and a year's supply of it sold out in two weeks.

So what's the big deal? The serum is a result of Boots working with scientists at Manchester, Nottingham and Liverpool universities for more than a decade. The outcome, they say, is the creation of new "game-changing" peptides that prompt the skin to repair damage and produce greater volumes of collagen and fibrillin. This is in no way a small claim. These two proteins are key to keeping skin firm and youthful. These new synthesised peptides mean that damage in the skin can be repaired with a serum — and what the scientists are describing as "damage" is what most of us understand to be "ageing".

Tested on a diverse range of skin types on more than 1,600 women, the peptide serum prompted brighter, smoother, less-lined skin. The technology behind it was groundbreaking enough to be presented at the American Academy of Dermatology annual meeting last month.

The real test, of course, was me trying it out at home. I was lucky enough to get a lab sample of the Future Renew serum six weeks ago. So does it work? After more than 20 years writing about beauty, I've tried hundreds of products and I can tell you that yes, this one does — and this is not something I say lightly.

My experience of it, along with some impressive clinical trials, mean that — for once — I believe this could actually be a product that justifies the hullabaloo surrounding it.

The serum comes in two sizes — 25ml (£34.95) and 50ml (£42.95) — and is designed to be used under a moisturiser. For the past six weeks, I've been using it twice a day alongside my existing routine. In the mornings I apply it after cleansing and before putting on SPF. At night I've been using it after I've cleansed and applied a prescription vitamin A cream, effectively using it as my new night cream.

As a beauty editor I already use slightly more high-tech (and I like to think, more effective) skincare products than most — and as such I was sceptical about whether I'd actually notice any differences at all from adding this new product. But, six weeks in, there's no disputing that slathering on the lightweight gel-cream does seem to have improved my complexion. Not only does it leave my skin feeling immediately moisturised — and is gentle enough to use around my eyes and also on my neck, which often reacts to high levels of active ingredients, such as vitamin A or vitamin C — but my skin has become noticeably smoother and more even, and rogue patches of redness and roughness have disappeared.

Given that I already use pretty potent skincare, I honestly didn't expect to see these sorts of changes from an over-the-counter serum, but I'm convinced enough that I'll keep using it. I would confidently recommend it to pretty much anyone over the age of 30. And not just because I like what it has done for my skin, but because of the research and testing that's gone into it.

When No7 tested the serum on 1,600 women, the results they got outstripped those they've had from any other serum. After just four weeks of using it, at least 87 per cent of testers thought their wrinkles had reduced, their skin tone and texture was more even, and their skin was less dry, firmer and more radiant. A six-month clinical trial involving a further 44 women aged between 30 and 75 found that these same markers of skin damage were reversed in 97 per cent of participants. Even a cynical beauty hack like me has to be impressed by results like this.

Peptides act as alarm signals to the body that damage is happening and repair is needed — cells respond to them by producing more of the proteins that are essential for giving skin support, bounce and elasticity. Of course many products already contain peptides, but these ones are different.

Dr Mike Bell, who is No7's head of science research, says these have been painstakingly identified as the ones most likely to have an impact on skin repair.

Other ingredients known to be good for skin were then added to the product, including vitamin C, hyaluronic acid and niacinamide.

The Future Renew range also includes a night cream (£34.95), an eye serum (£24.95) and a day cream with SPF 40 (£34.95) — but in my view, the serum is the only one worth bothering with as it contains the highest concentration of two new game-changing peptides. I also found it was fine to use around the eyes, so unless you have very sensitive skin you don't need to fork out for the eye serum too, and you don't need to pay £30-plus for a night cream or SPF, if you are already using one.

Let's be honest though, no cream — not even this wonder-serum — is going to turn the clock back overnight. If you have deep wrinkles, this serum isn't going to iron them away entirely. If you have patches of pigmentation, it won't make them vanish, and it's not going to give a 50-year-old the taut jawline of a twentysomething. But if you're looking for a good all-rounder that really will give results (and won't irritate even sensitive skin) at a relatively affordable price, get in the queue to buy it.

### **The other ingredients that really work**

Most dermatologists agree an effective skincare regime doesn't have to be complicated as long as it includes the right active ingredients that have been proven to be effective. Here's what you should be looking for:

#### **SPF**

This is a non-negotiable. A paper published in the journal of Clinical, Cosmetic and Investigational Dermatology concluded that, in Caucasian skin, the effect of UV and sun exposure on the visible signs of ageing — lines, wrinkles, pigmentation, sagging — is about 80 per cent. So get into the habit of using high-factor (SPF50), broad-spectrum sun protection every day. You should be wearing it even in winter. I like L'Oreal Revitalift Clinical Vitamin C SPF 50+ Daily Anti-UV Fluid (£9.99, [boots.com](https://www.boots.com)), which combines sun protection with vitamin C; and Altruist Sunscreen SPF50 (£5.25, [altruistsun.com](https://www.altruistsun.com)), developed by a dermatologist who wanted high-quality sun protection to be affordable. All are excellent under make-up.

#### **Vitamin A (often known as retinol)**

The gold-standard skincare ingredient, scientifically proven to help with fine lines, wrinkles, skin tone, skin firmness and helping to prevent breakouts. There's a prescription form, tretinoin, which you can get relatively inexpensively — about £20 a month — from Skin + Me ([skinandme.com](https://www.skinandme.com)) and Dermatica ([dermatica.co.uk](https://www.dermatica.co.uk)), but it's also available over the counter in various forms, including retinol and retinal. If you've not used it before, start with a gentle, low percentage as it can cause soreness and peeling if your skin isn't used to it. The Ordinary's Granactive Retinoid 2% Emulsion (£10.40, [theordinary.com](https://www.theordinary.com)) is a good introduction. Medik8's Crystal Retinal range (from £45, [medik8.com](https://www.medik8.com)) offers a stronger range.

## Vitamin B

While you might also find moisturising and hydrating vitamin B5, aka panthenol, in your skincare, the most common form is vitamin B3, aka niacinamide. It's anti-inflammatory and as well as brightening skin and strengthening the skin barrier, it also regulates oil production. Try the Olay Niacinamide 24 range (from £19).

## Vitamin C

This vitamin belongs to a family of ingredients called antioxidants, which can help neutralise unstable substances, known as free radicals, that are generated by pollution and UV light and are thought to accelerate the skin's ageing process. Vitamin C specifically also helps to boost the production of collagen. The beauty editors' favourite is the very pricey Skinceuticals CE Ferulic (£105, [flawlessbody.co.uk](https://www.flawlessbody.co.uk)). Medik8's Super C Ferulic (£59, [medik8.com](https://www.medik8.com)) is a less expensive option. I also like Formula 4 from 1611 Labs (£70, [1611labs.com](https://www.1611labs.com)).

Other ingredients to keep an eye out for include hyaluronic acid, which along with glycerin can help draw moisture to the skin; salicylic acid, which is great for spot-prone skin as it helps to degunk oily pores, and ceramides — forms of oil that are found naturally in the skin and help to moisturise and repair the skin.

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