

The Best Facial Cleanser Review

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A great review by [Review.com](https://www.review.com)

Best facial cleanser review is the best one you will find out there! It is backed up with lots of scientific information about the contents of each contender and the way each one reflects on your skin.

The 30-Second Review

The best facial cleanser should make quick work of makeup, dirt, and grease – all while being gentle to your skin. We consulted with skincare experts, scoured ingredient lists, and came away with a list of top-ranked cleansers. Then, we caked on the mascara, foundation, and other products to put our finalists to the test.

<p>Best Overall (With Sodium Laureth Sulfate) Cellex-C Betaplex Gentle Foaming Cleanser An easy winner for its mild ingredients, uncomplicated components, and superior cleansing capabilities. Its modest list of ingredients left our skin feeling fresh.</p>	<p>Other Top Picks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skyn ICELAND Pure Cloud Cleanser• CeraVe Hydrating Cleanser• Kate Somerville Exfolikate• Cleanser Daily Foaming Wash	<p>The Best Facial Cleansers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cellex-C Betaplex Gentle Foaming Cleanser Best Overall (With Sodium Laureth Sulfate)• Skyn ICELAND Pure Cloud Cleanser Best Overall (Without Sodium Laureth Sulfate)• CeraVe Hydrating Cleanser Best Drugstore Face Wash• Kate Somerville Exfolikate Cleanser Daily Foaming Wash Best Exfoliator
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The cruel fact of skin care? It's got to be done when doing it is the last thing on your mind: right after getting out of bed or right before getting back in. Unfortunately, a quick splash of water does nothing to remove makeup, dirt, or grease – that would be like walking in the rain to shampoo your hair – and the delicate skin on our cheeks betrays how often we skip washing it. Does it really have to be so hard? We talked to dermatologists and aestheticians about what should (and shouldn't) touch our skin, and while they didn't exactly see eye-to-eye, they did help us find the best facial cleanser. Our favorite, [Cellex-C Betaplex Gentle Foaming Cleanser](#), made our faces feel so fresh (and is so packed with great ingredients) that we're already looking forward to our next wash.

A face cleanser's job is literally cleaning your skin. It uses a mix of surfactants, humectants, and exfoliants to remove makeup, oil, sweat, and even bacteria and pollution – and the best ones do it without irritating your skin or stripping it of its natural oils.

How We Found the Best Facial Cleanser

To find the best face wash, we chatted with five skincare experts, dug deep into the ingredients lists of over 300 bestselling face washes, and then put the top contenders to the test.

We skipped over any cleanser meant to treat specific skin conditions, like acne or excessively oily skin.

The ingredients that make a cleanser effective for specific skin conditions also make them tough on normal skin – like

using a leaf blower to move a blade of grass.

We removed anything with harsh, oil-stripping ingredients.

It might sound counter-productive (or downright scary if you're prone to breakouts), but your face needs oil. And everyone's got some oil on their face – in fact, there's a critical film on your skin called the acid mantle that helps produce oil. That oil is your all-over bodyguard: It works as a natural antibacterial and keeps your skin's pH in check.

This acid mantle is, not surprisingly, slightly acidic (a 5.5 out of 14 on the pH scale), so using cleansers with high pH levels knocks your acid mantle out of whack. When the acid mantle isn't working well, the skin's natural antibacterial layer is compromised. The result? Your skin is more likely to break out, or have issues like inflammation and redness. We put any ingredients that threatened the acid mantle, including simple alcohols and three of the Big Four sulfates (sodium lauryl, aluminum lauryl, and aluminum laureth), on the chopping block.

“Products without sulfates are typically better and milder than those that have them – although products that include both sulfates and moisturizing ingredients to counteract their drying properties shouldn't be discounted.”

Dr. Debra Jaliman Author of [Skin Rules: Trade Secrets from a Top New York Dermatologist](#)

And what about number four? Sodium laureth is the one sulfate *most* experts agree is totally okay to include in facial cleansers. It's notorious sibling, sodium lauryl sulfate, can be particularly drying, but sodium laureth sulfate has a different chemical structure and milder effect that still produces that soapy lather associated with feeling clean. (Don't worry though – we made sure to include top picks

both with and without sulfates.)

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We nixed any contenders with controversial ingredients.

“Controversial” is a loaded word, fueled by a lot of consumer fear and a dearth of hard facts. For this review, we looked for ingredients that can be skin irritating at best and cancer-causing at worst – plus avoided any whose side effects are still undetermined or misunderstood. These included formaldehyde releasers like diazolidinyl urea and quaternium-15, pore-clogging fillers like mineral oil, and antibacterial agents like triclosan. We didn’t cut any cleansers for having parabens, since the concentration in face wash is well below the FDA’s recommendation. But there are plenty of options available if you’re not keen on them.

We were left with nearly 250 gels, creams, oils, bars and foams – all with ingredients we loved.

To help us pick out the best, we turned to two experts – a dermatologist and a top aesthetician – to weigh in on what ingredients to seek out, and then polled two more dermatologists on their go-to recommendations that we could put to the test.

Dr. Debra Jaliman, and author of Skin Rules, recommends:

- **Ceramides:** A group of lipids that retains water.
- **Bisabolol:** A derivative of chamomile that helps soothe skin.
- **Decyl glucoside:** A cleanser that’s so gentle it’s often used on babies.
- **Hyaluronic acid and glycerin:** Two humectants that bring on the moisture.

Meanwhile, *Kerry Benjamin*, aesthetician and founder of [Stacked Skincare](#), offered the following suggestions:

- **Aloe:** An all-natural antibacterial that pulls double-duty as an anti-inflammatory.
- **Allantoin:** A hydrating anti-inflammatory.
- **Glycerin and panthenol:** A double-dose of hydrators.
- **Jojoba oil:** An inexpensive, accessible surfactant. Benjamin loves using it to remove makeup before cleansing, since most face washes have a hard time removing everything. She recommends it as a standalone makeup remover, but it also boosts the makeup-removing power of face wash when it's in the mix, and it's good for all skin types because it doesn't clog pores.
- **Lactic and glycolic acid:** Exfoliating and moisturizing alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs). They're less irritating than physical exfoliators like sugars and salts for daily use. Benjamin also recommends citric acid, malic acid, and tartaric acid for the same reasons.
- **Rose hip (seed) oil:** An anti-inflammatory that combats signs of aging.
- **Vitamin E and shea butter:** Two different ways to soothe and moisturize.

We scoured our list of approved products for these powerhouse ingredients and combined any that had two or more with our experts' personal product recommendation. We wound up with 17.

To test how well each dissolved [makeup](#), we streaked the backs of our hands with waterproof mascara, eye shadow, long-lasting foundation, and baby oil; wet our skin with lukewarm water; and massaged a dime-size amount of cleanser for 15 seconds directly on the "dirt." Then, we washed our bare faces the same way. The best face wash was the one that decimated the makeup and oil, but still left our faces feeling fresh and

elastic.

Our Picks for the Best Facial Cleanser

Best Overall (With Sodium Laureth Sulfate)

[Cellex-C Betaplex Gentle Foaming Cleanser](#) An easy winner for its mild ingredients, uncomplicated components, and superior cleansing capabilities.

We love Cellex-C's Betaplex Gentle Foaming Wash for its mild ingredients, uncomplicated components, and superior cleansing capabilities. Aloe, lactic acid, and bisabolol are some of the gentle goodies in this gel. It does include sodium laureth sulfate, which *most* agree is mild enough for every day use, though those wary of any sulfates might be turned off. Cellex-C gets extra points for having a mere 12 ingredients, which is nothing compared to the 25+ found in the Aveeno and Kiehl's products we tested. It passed the makeup remover test with flying colors without having to scrub too vigorously. After following the instructions (which whimsically instructed us to "whisk" a thumbnail-sized amount of product in our palms), our faces were completely rejuvenated. Dry patches of winter skin were suddenly smooth and moisturized, and it felt like our faces were rid of any impurities. Our skin wasn't at all stiff after lathering it on, and good thing too: We couldn't help but smile.



Best facial cleanser

Best Overall (Without Sodium Laureth Sulfate)

[Skyn ICELAND Pure Cloud Cleanser](#) Its ability to remove every stitch of makeup cemented it as a winner.

Skyn won over our hearts by including a white muslin washcloth in its packaging (to help increase circulation, the company says), but the cleanser's ability to remove every stitch of makeup cemented it as a winner. Our skin felt nice using it, albeit not remarkably so – but after three nights in a row, we were converts and seriously contemplated moving to Reykjavik. Our faces felt exceptionally moisturized, thanks to the soybean oil and cocoa seed butter, and impeccably clean, in part due to antioxidants like thyme leaf extract and meadowfoam seed oil. The star ingredients, though, are arctic cloudberry and arctic cranberries. The berries are packed with skin-brightening vitamin C and are superb antioxidants. While cautious shoppers might not pursue this option (there aren't many studies done on the cloudberry's effectiveness in cosmetics), it could do us good to trust the skincare science of Scandinavians.



Best facial cleanser overall

Best Drugstore Face Wash

[CeraVe Hydrating Cleanser](#) Most of our experts mentioned this drugstore staple by name;

ceramides, hyaluronic acid, and glycerin take dirt off and keep moisture in.

Most of our experts mentioned this face wash by name, and that's no surprise: Formulated with humectants like ceramides, hyaluronic acid, and glycerin, this drugstore staple takes dirt off and keeps moisture in. The cream has a very faint, innocuous smell to it – not too flowery or too medicinal – and it's thin and glides on. The first word that came to mind once we towed off was *fresh*. Our skin felt elastic, smooth, and undeniably clean. CeraVe took off all the makeup in our hand test *except* for the mascara, which would have disqualified it except that small patch of skin felt so amazing we couldn't stop ourselves from going all in. The downside: Anyone freaked by parabens will find two on this ingredients label.



Best facial cleanser in drugstores

Best Exfoliator

[Kate Somerville Exfolikate Cleanser Daily Foaming Wash](#) The sleek, simple design of the tube caught our eye initially, and it didn't disappoint in our testing.

It was the sleek, simple design of this tube that caught our eye initially, but the Exfolikate Cleanser didn't disappoint in our testing. Makeup was rendered nonexistent and the wash was equally effective on our faces: Two AHAs and anti-inflammatory ingredients (enzymes from pumpkins, pineapples, and papayas) exfoliated our skin without leaving it raw.

Our skin didn't feel dry or too tight after we applied the pleasant-smelling wash, but instead was flexible and hydrated. Label-scanners might pause at sodium hydroxide (known better as lye), but it's low on the ingredient list and an abundance of soothing agents should compensate for any drying or irritation it would cause.



Best facial cleanser – exfoliator

Did You Know?

Lots of ingredients have a bad rap – some might not deserve it.

Parabens. Parabens are preservatives meant to extend the shelf life of face washes and cosmetics by stopping the growth of microorganisms, keeping them out of your product and therefore off your face. These guys have been getting a lot of bad press; in 2004, a study was released regarding the presence of parabens in breast tumors. The research was inconclusive though, and the FDA has since deemed parabens safe for use. It does advise avoiding products that are more than 25 percent parabens (not difficult – most face cleansers' paraben levels are less than 1 percent), but for those who want to avoid them altogether, there are a ton of paraben-free options.

Sulfates. Sulfates are surfactants – what puts the *clean* in cleanser – and were developed to replace soaps made from fat and alkali. According to Robert Ross-Fichtner, president and CEO of [Focal Point Research](#), sulfates “are widely misunderstood and are often maligned for no good reason.” Dr. Heather D. Rogers, co-founder of [Modern Dermatology](#) in Seattle, is also pro-sulfate, acknowledging that while some, like sodium lauryl sulfate, might be irritating to the skin if left on too long, sodium *laureth* sulfate cleans well and won't cause irritation.

“Your face wash is only on your skin for a short period of

time. Its role is to take off the dirt, grime, and makeup of the day without irritation so your skin is clean and able to absorb as much of the active ingredients in your other skincare products as it can.”

Dr. Heather D. Rogers Co-founder of [Modern Dermatology](#),
Seattle, WA

Alcohols. The ones people mean when they say to avoid alcohol in your face wash are simple alcohols – ethyl alcohol, isopropyl alcohol, SD alcohol, alcohol denat. (denatured) – which are just like the alcohol that’s in vodka and that serve as the base for hair spray. They’re irritating to the skin for exactly the same reason they make great hair spray: They evaporate crazy fast. When they hit your skin, they obliterate the natural oils, then evaporate, carrying precious moisture with it. The [Center for Disease Control](#) found that frequently using alcohol-based products can cause dry skin. That impact is reduced if the formula includes emollients, humectants, or other skin-conditioning agents (which most face washes do), but the general opinion is why work to counteract the effects of something when you can just avoid them altogether? Fatty alcohols on the other hand – anything called cetyl, cetearyl, or behenyl – are derived from oils, and they are actually moisturizing. Just another misunderstood healthy fat.

Fragrance. The short answer: If you have sensitive skin, avoid face wash with fragrance listed in the ingredients. The longer answer: Fragrance is a blanket name for whatever proprietary concoction a brand formulates to scent its products. It doesn’t have to list out what’s inside as long as they can prove everything is safe to use if the instructions are followed. Dr. Peter Lio, a dermatologist and partner at [Medical Dermatology Associates of Chicago](#), recommends to just avoid it: “It can be fine in certain situations, but I don’t think it’s good for a daily face wash for normal skin.”

Your face wash is only as good as the rest of your skin routine.

Ultimately, no matter how promising its ingredient list, your face wash can only do so much. Benjamin says the tools you use and your approach to the cleansing process are equally as important as the product you use. She recommends starting with a dedicated makeup remover, followed by a facial cleanser, and exfoliating with a weekly peel to slough off dead cells and reveal brighter, clearer skin.

And that skin care routine should include exfoliation.

An exfoliant can be chemical (think alpha hydroxyl acids) or physical (like a sugar scrub), but no matter what, it's a pivotal partner in bright, smooth skin. Since exfoliators remove dead skin – a culprit of clogged skin – it's a good idea to choose a wash with an exfoliating element.

It was tough to find a consensus on how often we should use exfoliating washes, though. While many of our contenders marked for daily use contain chemical exfoliants, Dr. Rogers advises having two separate face washes: “one for daily use and another to use once or twice a week that has a chemical exfoliant like glycolic acid for dry skin or salicylic acid for oily skin.”

One thing all our experts agreed on was the preference for chemical exfoliants over physical ones, whose rough edges can be too hard for delicate skin.

Take Action

Identify your own key ingredients. Do you wear a lot of makeup or go to the gym every day? Look for a strong surfactant. Sensitive skin? A mild cleanser with plenty of humectants is a better bet.

Don't change your entire routine at once. Flipping your skincare world upside-down can cause your skin to freak out – and make it impossible to determine which product is guilty. Introduce new products one at a time.

Remember to moisturize. Cleaning your face is just one step in a healthy skincare routine. Next? We'd suggest a good [facial moisturizer](#).

Original review

resource: <http://www.reviews.com/facial-cleanser/>