

The 4-Week Retinoid Sandwich Checklist

Retinoid + azelaic acid, buffered — all the glow, none of the peeling.
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The sandwich, every time

1. Cleanse with a creamy low-pH cleanser, pat dry, wait 10 minutes.
2. First slice — thin, even layer of ceramide cream. Settle 2–3 minutes.
3. Filling — one pea of retinoid for the whole face. Skip eyelids, nose creases, smile lines for month one.
4. Second slice — a slightly more generous layer of the same cream.
5. Very dry? A thin occlusive balm or 2 drops of squalane on the driest zones only.

Your four weeks

Week	Retinoid nights	Azelaic acid	Check before moving on
1	2 nights (e.g. Sun + Wed)	None yet	No flaking at all
2	3 nights	None yet	Skin calm, no tightness after cleansing
3	Alternate nights	Every other morning	No stinging under sunscreen
4	4 nights	Every morning	Comfortable — most people stay here

If you flake mid-ramp, drop back one week and add a moisturiser-only night. Results track total exposure over months — not how brave you were in week two.

Daily non-negotiables

- ☐ Dry skin only — never apply a retinoid to damp skin.
- ☐ One active per routine. No acids, vitamin C or scrubs on retinoid nights.
- ☐ SPF 50 every single morning, reapplied if you're out.
- ☐ No physical scrubs or exfoliating pads for the full four weeks.
- ☐ Week three is the dip. Week six is the reason people stay.

If you've already over-done it

Stop all actives for 5–7 days — stop, not “go gentle.” Creamy cleanser, ceramide moisturiser twice daily, thin occlusive balm at night on raw patches. When tightness and flaking have fully stopped, restart at Week 1, not where you left off.

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