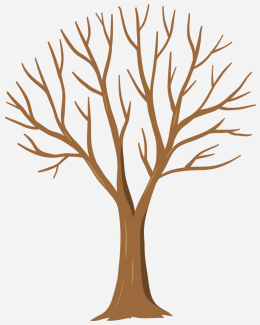
HOW CELL TURNOVER SLOWS WITH AGE

Cell Turnover

Cell turnover refers to the skin's natural renewal process in which old, dead skin cells are shed from the surface and replaced by new cells formed in the deeper layers of the epidermis. In younger skin, this cycle is efficient and well-regulated, which is why the complexion tends to look brighter, smoother, and more even in tone. As we age, this process naturally slows, and that slowdown becomes one of the key reasons skin can appear duller or less refined over time.

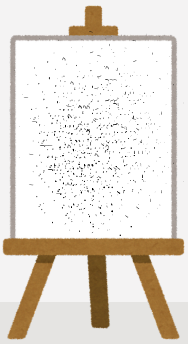
In youthful skin, the full cell turnover cycle is typically around 28–30 days. With age, this cycle can extend to 40–60 days or even longer depending on genetics, lifestyle, stress levels, and environmental exposure. *Think of the cell-turnover cycle as fully shedding the old and fully replacing the new skin cells, not just the production of new skin cells.*

Although this process doesn't happen all at the same time, you can think of it like the same process as a tree losing its leaves in fall and regrowing in spring.



As this process slows, dead skin cells remain on the surface longer while newer cells take more time to reach the top layer. Since they remain on the surface, this buildup can lead to a dull appearance, uneven texture, and a reduction in that natural glow. It can also make fine lines more visible simply because the skin surface is no longer renewing as smoothly or regularly as it once did.

Additonally, this buildup can "block" your topical products, making them less effective. Think of it as trying to paint on a dusty canvas. Without wiping down the canvas first, your paint will not apply evenly to the entire surface. There will be some areas that the paint doesn't even reach the canvas.



Several factors contribute to this slowing process. Natural aging reduces the speed and efficiency of epidermal cell production. UV exposure adds cumulative damage that interferes with normal cellular function, while chronic inflammation, oxidative stress, and hormonal shifts can further disrupt the skin's ability to maintain a steady renewal rhythm. As cell turnover slows, it also begins to influence other aspects of skin health, including how well products absorb, how easily congestion forms, and how even the skin tone appears.

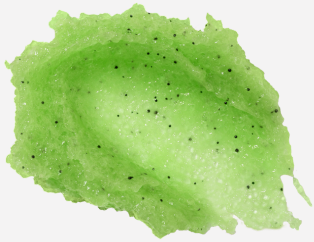
What you can do

Supporting cell turnover becomes an important part of maintaining healthy skin with age, but the key is balance. Ingredients like retinoids help normalize the renewal process and encourage more consistent shedding and regeneration of skin cells.

Exfoliating acids such as AHAs and BHAs can also be helpful by removing built-up dead skin on the surface, which allows fresher, healthier-looking skin to come through more easily.

Enzymes help support cell turnover by breaking down the protein bonds that hold dead skin cells together on the surface of the skin. This makes it easier for those cells to shed naturally, allowing fresher skin to come through more smoothly.

Physical exfoliation like scrubs or dry brushes can be appropriate in some instances, but we tend to choose other methods of exfoliation that are more gentle on your delicate skin.



The skin barrier plays a critical role in regulating cell turnover because it protects the skin from external stressors while maintaining optimal hydration and internal function. When the barrier is compromised, the skin can become more inflamed and less efficient at repairing itself, which can actually slow down healthy turnover rather than improve it.

This is why over-exfoliation is one of the most common mistakes in skincare. While exfoliation is beneficial in moderation, too much can strip the barrier, increase sensitivity, and trigger a cycle of inflammation that disrupts normal skin renewal.

A balanced approach is key:

- Gentle, consistent exfoliation is more effective than aggressive or frequent treatments
- Supporting the barrier with hydration, ceramides, and lipids helps maintain a healthy renewal environment
- Retinoids and exfoliants should be introduced gradually and adjusted based on tolerance
- More is not better. Over-stimulating the skin can slow progress rather than improve it

When the barrier is healthy and the skin is not being over-treated, cell turnover can function more efficiently. This allows the skin to maintain a brighter, smoother appearance while still respecting its natural rhythm. Ultimately, supporting cell turnover is not just about speeding it up, it’s about creating the right conditions for the skin to renew itself in a stable, balanced, and sustainable way over time.

There’s no need to feel overwhelmed! Finding the right balance of exfoliation and barrier care is in the hands of your aesthetician. We take this into consideration when selecting products for your routine. Now you have a better understanding of why you’re using the products we picked out for you, and how they all play a synergistic role.