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P50 Lotion: Life-Changing? Yes, Pretty Much

It's unclear when the cult of [P50](#) started, although we'd have to assume it was around the time that [Biologique Recherche](#) first released the wonder product, which has become the cornerstone of its 40-year-old line. With active ingredients including usnic acid, lactic acid, witch hazel, onion extract, myrrh extract, and sage extract, the toner-cum-astringent -cum-"balancing lotion" occupies a coveted space among beauty urban legends. Many have heard of its transformative powers, although why it actually works remains elusive. **“It just balances your skin,” says Shyou Hung, famed New York facialist of Salon de Shyou in SoHo. As one of the first aestheticians to start offering P50, Hung prescribes the tonic to all of her clients, which include a gaggle of models and please-don't-print-their-names-in-your-article celebrities who can often be seen leaving her Thompson Street digs. “It's really unique,” she says. “It actually makes pores smaller!”—among other things.** Essentially a daily exfoliant that effectively removes dead skin cells to allow for cell regeneration, P50 gently purifies, hydrates, and tones while controlling sebum and reducing any proclivity you might have toward breakouts and rosacea (editor's note: it's also excellent for pre- and post-shaving care). While it can take about a week to start working and the smell is not for the faint of heart (that combination of lactic acid and onion extract is pungent at best), it can be quite habit-forming. Once your skin has experienced P50, the visible difference makes it hard to go back.

About this blog: Editor Celia Ellenberg covers the beauty industry from head to toe.