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Skincare Review: Glissandra 3-Step Anti-Aging Skincare System

by KATE on SEPTEMBER 6, 2010



So many makers of ‘functional’ beauty products, like anti-aging creams, often make vague assertions about how their product is supposed to work – such as pseudoscientific buzz-phrases like “flushes out toxins” or “provides nutritional support”. These claims are frequently accompanied by an appeal to your emotional side, emphasizing that their products are 100% natural or associating them traditional remedies from around the globe. While I certainly want to enjoy and feel good about my beauty products, I also want them

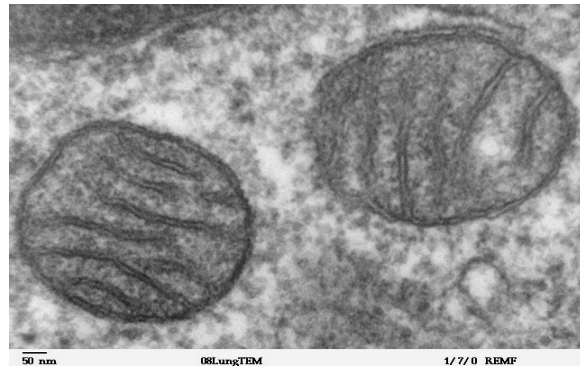
to work! So when the **Glissandra Skin Care System** crossed my review docket, I was pleasantly surprised that this was a company that was not only trying to appeal to the emotional side as a luxury skin care brand, but was also appealing to the logical side in showing off the science to back up their product line.

Before I delve into the science behind Glissandra, a little background on some theories of aging:

We’ve probably all heard that free radical damage is one of the underlying causes of the changes in skin associated with aging. We’ve also probably all heard that free radicals, which are short-lived but highly reactive molecules, are produced in skin cells as a result of UV exposure. But there is also an intrinsic source of free radicals in all cells: the mitochondria, cellular organelles that are best known as the source of the energetic currency of our bodies, ATP. Mitochondria use a series of chemical electron-transfer reactions to convert energy from nutrients into energy stored as ATP (a process known as [oxidative phosphorylation](#)). ATP is then used by our cells for nearly everything that requires stored energy: maintaining cells and tissues, moving nutrients around, cell division, cellular signaling, ion regulation, and on and on. Sometimes, though, electrons can be misdirected during oxidative phosphorylation, and react with oxygen to produce reactive oxygen species. These can further propagate other free radicals, leading to molecular and cellular damage. Although the mitochondria have some proteins that control reactive

oxygen species as they're produced, **as cells age, there is an increased leakage of free radicals from mitochondria.**

Some theories of aging hold that this free radical leakage is an aging double-whammy: our cells respond to the presence of free radicals with an inflammatory response. The inflammatory response is very beneficial for dealing with infection or injury, however, long term inflammation has been associated with an increase disease risk. Especially notable for skin aging, free radicals and the subsequent inflammatory response has been associated with the increased production of enzymes that remodel the extracellular matrix—enzymes often referred to in beauty-industry lingo as “collagen-destroying enzymes”.



Mitochondria from Mammalian Lung Cells

Wearing a UVA blocking sunscreen everyday will help protect your skin from UV-induced free radicals (and other forms of UV damage), but what about those intrinsic free radicals?

This is where Glissandra wants their products to come in.



Schisandra chinensis berries

Glissandra products are based around a core ingredients group: Schisandrin B, γ -Schisandrin, Schisandrin A and Schisandrin C, all extracts from the berries of the Schisandra plant (also known as the Chinese Magnolia). In experiments presented by Glissandra, they show the results of experiments in which treating skin cells or tissue with Schisandrins improved the anti-oxidant capacity of the cells, had a protective effect against free-radical damage, and suppressed inflammatory responses in skin cells after UV-light exposure. Although the studies on skin cells don't yet seem to be in the peer-reviewed literature, I did find a number of peer-reviewed

studies that showed similar results—boosting cellular anti-oxidant capacity and suppressing inflammation, as well as improving mitochondrial function and integrity—in other cell types.

Although the number of studies and the results with the Schisandrins seem impressive, there is still a lot to be shown before the claim can be made that using a Schisandrin-containing cream will actually help prevent skin aging. First, do the Schisandrins in the cream actually penetrate deep into the skin and into skin cells? The results on skin cells highlighted in the Glissandra scientific bulletin appear to be on isolated or cultured skin cells – ultimately it doesn't matter how well the Schisandrins work on cells in a dish if the Schisandrins in the cream doesn't actually get into *your* skin cells! Second, does long term use on human skin actually promote long term stability of mitochondrial function? Does this actually reduce the apparent age of a user's skin? And what is the mechanism by which the Schisandrins affect mitochondrial biology, i.e. what proteins or molecules in the mitochondria are



Schisandra rubriflora flowers

interacting with and being directly affected by the Schisandrins, and how does this affect mitochondrial function? Clear answers to these questions are an absolute must for any drug maker wanting to make claims about the efficacy of their products, but as many readers are aware the standard for beauty product and supplement claims is much different. Admittedly, answering these last few questions requires some intensive research and a lot of long-term studies. *So, if you are considering Glissandra for your own beauty routine, be aware that although Schisandrins seem like a promising ingredients for potentially slowing down skin aging, it's far from proven that you will actually see this effect long term.* That being said, when it comes to choosing the products to purchase with your hard-earned cash, I'd prefer an anti-aging moisturizer with ingredients that show some scientific promise instead of just supporting a feel-good marketing story!

So, how did the Glissandra system perform in my field test?

The **Glissandra 3-step Skin Care System** is composed of the **Restorative Serum**, the **Age Renewal Face Cream**, and the **Rejuvenating Eye Cream**. The recommendation is to apply the serum to problem skin areas first, and then apply the face and eye creams over the serum.



I found the **Restorative Serum** light, very smooth, and pleasant to apply. The pump bottle packaging operates very smoothly and is easy to keep clean. I loved the scent of the product – there is a little hint of balsam in a fresh, milky, botanical aroma – distinct but not overpowering. The serum goes on in a thin layer that absorbs quickly, and used alone it makes a nice, lightweight moisturizer. On the hot, humid summer mornings during my trial of the Glissandra products, the serum provided just the right amount of moisture for my combination / oily skin. Applying the face and eye creams over the serum felt a little bit too heavy, but outside of the dog days of summer the moisturizing level of the serum + creams will probably be quite nice.

The eye and face creams match the serum in terms of the scent and the honey glow that I expect comes from the Schisandrin extract itself (given the fact the Schisandra berries are so brightly colored, and there are no coloring agents on the ingredients list). Both creams have a silky, rich texture, and apply very smoothly. After letting the creams absorb into the skin for a few

minutes, my skin doesn't feel greasy and it's easy to apply makeup (although I will note that I use a powder foundation – a moisturizing foundation on top would might slip around). The creams are nicely moisturizing and keep my skin feeling nice and soft all day. The packaging is also a plus – the jars are solid, with easy screw caps that don't leak, and the packaging itself is fairly elegant without any loud slogans. There would be no self-consciousness if your friends saw it while traveling or on your medicine shelf!

My one complaint about the Glissandra system is that the products don't contain any UV-blocking ingredients, so to incorporate these products into a good anti-aging skin care



routine you'd probably want to add a sunscreen. I used the Glissandra system with a powder foundation containing titanium and zinc oxides, but if you are using a liquid sunscreen you might find that your skin feels over-moisturized with the multiple layers of products.



After using the system for 5 weeks, I feel my skin is well moisturized and has a healthy glow. I had a tough time evaluating the Glissandra system on the wrinkle-reduction claims – since I began reviewing products for Beauty Debutante I've been consistently applying moisturizer on a daily basis, and this alone has made a big difference in the little fine lines I was starting to get! I'm left with expression lines, and it would be a lot to ask any cream to get rid of those, especially in just a few weeks.

I was impressed that the Schisandrin extract was high on the ingredients list for all three products. In the face cream, it is second on the ingredients list (after water) – Schisandrin came in at #3 and #4 in the eye cream and serum, respectively, behind other moisturizing bases.

The **Glissandra 3-step system** is priced at USD \$296 for all three components together, or individually at USD \$150 for the Restorative Serum (1 oz), \$99 for the Age Renewal Face Cream (1.7 oz), and \$48 for the Rejuvenating Eye Cream (0.49 oz). If you want to try out Glissandra's products but the 3-part system is priced out of your budget, I'd suggest trying the eye cream first. Not only is it the lowest-priced component of the system (the price is pretty wallet-friendly for a 'luxury' eye cream), but the eye cream contains both a high concentration of the Schisandrin extracts along with a lot of the same ingredients that are the marketing stars of other high-end eye creams, such as peptides, tocopherol, and hyaluronate.

Want to get your hands on the Glissandra Skin Care System? The best place to find it is straight from the [Glissandra](#) website.

About the Author

Dr. Kate Young, PhD, is a research postdoctoral fellow studying the neurobiology of sensation. Although her research specialty isn't directly related to cosmetics and skin care, she brings the skepticism and conscientiousness from her scientific training into her evaluations of beauty products for Beauty Debutante.com. Whether the topic is neuroscience or skin care, she always likes to see elegant experiments and good solid data! When she's not in the lab or blogging, she enjoys playing outside (running, bicycling, and kayaking) and playing with her two cats.

About Beauty Debutante

Beauty Debutante was created by Jaime Palmucci and Kristy Keaton as a way to share the brightest and best brands available in the beauty industry. This sister site of Denim Debutante has developed a strong and loyal following of readers who look for honesty, integrity and quality reviews of products. Since its inception in June 2010, the site has grown to over 10 contributing writers and 15,000 visitors every month.