EAST RUTHERFORD, NJ · LONDON



Jillian Blair

SKIN

RESTORE THE BARRIER. SUPPORT THE SKIN.

Your Barrier-First Routine Guide

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How to Use This Guide

Disclaimer: This guide is for educational purposes only and isn't a substitute for professional dermatological or medical advice. Patch test new products. Consult a licensed provider before changing your routine, especially if pregnant, nursing, or using prescription treatments. Individual results vary.

Notice: Some links in this guide are affiliate links, Jillian Blair and Co. LLC, and/or its employees may earn a commission at no cost to you. Every product is one Jillian personally uses, has used or recommends to clients.

Every step is grounded in one principle: a healthy barrier is the foundation everything else is built on. Products and actives are more likely to work and results are more likely to happen when it's healthy.

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SECTION 1

The Barrier, Explained

Your skin barrier is the outermost layer standing between your skin and everything working against it, which is pretty much everything - the environment, product overuse, and stress (and more) all show up here first.

A healthy barrier holds moisture in and irritants out. A compromised one does neither. If you have ever wondered why the same routine can feel different week to week, it's because life happens. One week it's cold, another you are stressed and your skin reacts to it all.

Signs Your Barrier Needs Support

- Tightness or stinging after cleansing
- Redness or flushing that wasn't there before
- Breakouts alongside dry, flaking patches - not one or the other
- Products that used to work suddenly feel irritating
- Skin that looks dull despite a full routine

What To Do?

When you spot the signs your skin barrier is in distress, you'll want to correct your course:

- Take a quick look at what is different. It could be anything - season changes, stress, food choices, etc.
- Make an effort to address what changed. Then, when you adjust your skincare routine, it can succeed.
- Consider a facial. You'll get instant feedback from skincare expert and a facial may help support your reset.
- Take a look at your skincare routine and make adjustments as necessary.
- If symptoms persist or worsen, see a licensed provider.

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When More is Too Much

More products don't equal more results. In fact, layering actives to fix a problem faster is a common cause of a compromised barrier. When skin reacts, the instinct is to add. Often, the fix is to subtract.

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The Jillian Blair Skin Approach

Every JBS Method protocol, in-studio or at home, starts with barrier assessment. Results that don't hold can often be a barrier problem wearing a different disguise.

SECTION 2

Know Your Skin

The five-step routine holds true regardless of skin type. What changes is what you use, the frequency and where you adjust when your skin flares up. Find your skin-type below and take note of what adjustment you need to make to your own routine - it will come in handy later.

Oily / Breakout-Prone
Barrier issues here often get mistaken for "too much oil" and usually get treated with stripping cleansers, which can backfire. Keep the gel or low-pH cleanser, don't skip moisturizer, and introduce actives slower than you think you need to.

Dry / Dehydrated
These are two different problems that look similar. Dry means low oil; dehydrated means low water. Many people are dehydrated, not dry. Hyaluronic acid on damp skin, sealed with a richer moisturizer, can help more than adding oil alone.

Reactive / Rosacea-Prone
Treat every new product as a maybe and introduce one change at a time. Always patch test for several days, and lean on the four-step compromised-barrier routine in Section 6 more often than not. If you suspect rosacea or another condition, check with your dermatologist or physician.

Mature / Perimenopausal
Estrogen decline can thin the barrier and slow repair, so recovery from actives takes longer than it used to. Richer textures and a slower active-introduction schedule often work better than pushing the same routine you used a decade ago. If you suspect a hormonal condition, check with your dermatologist or physician.

SECTION 3

Your Daily Routine: Morning

The full explanations are in Section 4. This is the routine you can follow each morning.

1. **Cleanse**
   Gentle, with warm water. Never hot water.

2. **Hydrate / Tone**
   Prep skin for the next layer.

3. **Treat**
   Barrier-supporting serum.

4. **Moisturize**
   Lightweight, never stripping.

5. **SPF**
   Non-negotiable. Every day.

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A Note on SPF

SPF wears off so apply before you leave the house and then reapply as your day demands. Sweating? Outdoors? It's the afternoon and it's been hours? Reapply. Carry SPF with you. There are SPFs for all occasions. If you'd like to learn more about SPF, we have several posts on our blog Global Complexions.

SECTION 3

Your Daily Routine: Evening

The full explanation is in Section 5. This is the version you can follow each night.

1. **Cleanse**
   Double cleanse if wearing SPF/makeup.

2. **Hydrating Toner / Essence**
   Optional, recommended.

3. **Active Treatment**
   Only when barrier is healthy.

4. **Hydrating Serum**
   Richer than the morning version.

5. **Night Moisturizer**
   Seals in repair overnight.

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Hydrating Overnight

Did you know that your skin actually loses moisture while you sleep? When you moisturize in the evening, you're locking moisture in, supporting your skin's natural repair cycle and strengthen the skin barrier. When you're moisturizing before bed, you're also allowing active ingredients to work more effectively with no sunlight or additional environmental pollutants.

SECTION 4

Morning in-Depth

1. Cleanse

A gentle, water-based cleanser removes overnight oil and sweat without stripping the barrier you're about to build on.

MISTAKE

Hot Water & Stripping Cleansers

Hot water and foaming, high-pH cleansers can compromise a barrier before the day even starts.

1

Warm Water

Use lukewarm water to cleanse. Too cold and it won't remove oil and dirt. Too hot (see above).

2

Cleanser

Use a gentle, water-based cleanser unless otherwise advised. Gently splash water on your face and hands. Use your fingers to apply cleanser and gently lather, avoiding the eyes and nostrils before rinsing.

3

Washcloths, Loofahs, Sponges - Oh My!

If you're going to use one, they must be clean - every time. So they must be properly washed and dried after each use.

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Skin Towels

Environmentally friendly products like Clean Skin Club disposable, one use towels are made to support your skin barrier. Their brand says the towels help prevent the spread of bacteria due to reuse, and provide, a clean, sanitary alternative to washcloths and other items that you have to wash but are never perfectly clean. Learn more about them on the blog. You can even score a 10% discount with code JILLIANBLAIRSKIN on cleanskinclub.com

JILLIAN'S PICK

iS Clinical Cleansing Complex

A gentle, balanced-pH cleanser

SECTION 4

Morning in-Depth
2 & 3. Hydrate/Tone, Treat

2. Hydrate / Tone

This step preps skin to actually absorb what comes next. It is skippable on rushed mornings, but never wasted when included.

3. Treat

This is a barrier-supporting serum - think hyaluronic acid, niacinamide, ceramides. It goes on skin that's still damp for better absorption.

INGREDIENT SPOTLIGHT

Barrier-Building Ingredients

Ceramides, niacinamide, and hyaluronic acid don't just hydrate, they help support the structure that keeps everything else in and irritants out.

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Products Work Together

Your skin doesn’t actually need much to be healthy. Just remember to choose products wisely so that a little can go a long way. This means you want all of your products to work together. One should complement or build on what the other is doing. If you don’t know what you need or what to select around a personal favorite, ask your esthetician or your dermatologist. Always remember to patch test new products before you fully introduce them into your routine!

JILLIAN'S PICKS

Face Reality Calming Facial Toner
Gentle, soothing and hydrating with barbadensis leaf extract and rose flower water

Face Reality HydraRemedy Gel Serum
Hydrating and soothing

SECTION 4

Morning in-Depth
4 & 5. Moisturize, SPF

4. Moisturize

Lightweight doesn't mean thin. The right morning moisturizer seals in the serum without feeling heavy under SPF and then makeup if you wear it.

5. SPF

Barrier damage and sun damage are the same conversation. This step isn't optional, regardless of season or skin tone. We talked a lot about SPF on the blog and even in Good Housekeeping where I shared my thoughts in this article: *A facialist reveals the 5 signs your SPF isn't working as well as you think.*

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TIP

Mineral vs. Chemical

For barrier-compromised or reactive skin, mineral SPF (zinc oxide) tends to sit better than chemical formulas. But there are pros and cons to both and scenarios where one may be the better choice over the other. Learn more about this here.

JILLIAN'S PICKS

EltaMD UV Clear
A mineral SPF

iS Clinical Eclipse
A Titanium Dioxide and micronized Zinc Oxide SPF

Face Reality Daily SPF
A lightweight sunscreen with sheer application

SECTION 5

Evening in-Depth
1 & 2. Cleanse, Tone

MISTAKE

Skipping the Double Cleanse

If you wear makeup, sunscreen (of course you do), sweat, you've got a lot of build up on your face over the course of a day. One cleanse will leave behind a residue of everything you put on your face and the excess oil that built up because of it. This can lead to clogged pores, breakouts and can keep your nighttime routine from working well.

1. Cleanse

If SPF or makeup was worn, a double cleanse (oil, then water-based) clears residue without over-scrubbing.

1

Oil Based Cleanser
Apply to face with dry hands and massage 30-60 seconds. Add lukewarm water and emulsify and then rinse off completely.

2

Water Based Cleanser
Apply to damp skin, lather and rinse with lukewarm water, pat dry.

2. Hydrating Toner / Essence

Optional, but it can give active ingredients a better surface to land on later in the routine.

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Oil vs. Water

Not all cleansers are created equal. When choosing cleansers for your nighttime routine, you need to know what you are targeting. Water based cleansers will wash away dirt, pollution and sweat. Oil based cleansers will dissolve and remove SPF, makeup and excess sebum (your body's natural oils).

JILLIAN'S PICKS

Face Reality Ultra Gentle Cleanser
Water based cleanser

Medik8 Lipid-Balance Cleansing Oil
Oil based cleanser

SECTION 5

Evening in-Depth
3. Active Treatment

Retinol, acids, and vitamin C belong here but only once the barrier is healthy enough to handle them.

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TIP

When to Introduce Actives

Start once every third night, not nightly. Graduate to 1-2x per week. Barrier tolerance builds over weeks, not days.

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MISTAKE

Layering Too Many Actives

Retinol and acids on the same night is a common cause of a reactive barrier we see in-studio. Note: Retinol is not approved for use during pregnancy, check with your physician about the details, even if you are thinking about becoming pregnant or are nursing.

JILLIAN'S PICKS

iS Clinical Retinol Emulsion
Designed to provide the strength of medical-grade retinol with less peeling, redness, and dryness than traditional formulas

Face Reality Mandelic Serums
Water based, Alpha-hydroxy acids available in 5%, 8% or 11%

Evening in-Depth
4 & 5. Serum, Night Moisturizer

4. Hydrating Serum

A richer version of the morning serum. This is repair mode, so skin will welcome a more robust serum.

5. Night Moisturizer

An occlusive-forward formula seals the barrier overnight, supporting overnight repair.

JILLIAN'S PICKS

iS Clinical Hydra-Cool Serum
A formulated Hyaluronic Acid which can rejuvenate, hydrate, and visibly soothe the skin

Dr. Dennis Gross Derminfusion Blur + Repair Cream
A lightweight hydrating cream

SECTION 6

Adaptive Routines

When Your Barrier Is Compromised

Strip it back to four steps: gentle cleanser, hydrating serum, moisturizer, SPF in the morning. At night, the same but without the SPF. No actives until the tightness, redness, or stinging resolves.

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Your Skin Barrier

Your skin is a barrier and when it is healthy, the good stuff stays in and it keeps all the bad stuff out. It is also reactive so when it is mistreated, or encounters harsh conditions, it will let you know with redness, dryness or tightness and through breakouts. At Jillian Blair Skin, we believe in restoring or maintaining the balance of the skin barrier above all else.

When You're Breaking Out

Add a targeted acne treatment on top of the barrier-first base, never in place of it. A stripped-back barrier can make breakouts worse, not better.

Seasonal Adjustments

Winter	Richer, more occlusive moisturizer; consider adding a facial oil as the final PM step.
Summer	Lighter product textures, and a strategic approach to extra SPF.

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Always Seek Professional Advice

If irritations or sensitivities continue for more than two weeks, or get worse at any point, see your dermatologist or physician.

SECTION 7

Your Cycle & Your Skin

Hormones move through the month, and your barrier moves with them. Many people notice skin behaves differently in the same week every cycle - this is common and expected, not a sign your routine has failed. Track the patterns before making a decision that something is wrong and then fighting it in the moment.

Your Skin Through the Phases

1

Follicular (post-period)
Estrogen is rising and skin tends to tolerate the most. Often the best time to introduce or step up an active.

2

Ovulation
Skin is frequently at its calmest and most hydrated. A good stretch to stick with your baseline routine rather than change anything.

3

Luteal (pre-period)
Progesterone rises, oil production increases, and this is when most hormonal breakouts and barrier sensitivity show up along the jawline and chin.

4

Menstrual
Estrogen and progesterone both drop. Skin often reads as drier and more reactive, even for people who are oily the rest of the month.

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MISTAKE

Adding Actives Right Before Your Period

The luteal breakout is the moment most people reach for a stronger acid or retinol. It's also exactly when the barrier can least tolerate it. Instead, hold your active schedule steady and let the breakout run its course on a calm base rather than an irritated one.

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TIP

Shift the Schedule, Not the Routine

If actives consistently feel like too much in the luteal week, spot treat on the area where it is really needed vs. adding the active across your whole face which may help minimize or localize irritation.

SECTION 8

Perimenopause & Menopause

Your skin changes as hormones shift, and for many people that starts well before periods stop. Perimenopause can last for years, and the changes tend to be gradual and uneven. Your routine isn't failing you. Your skin's needs are changing, and a barrier-first approach adapts well to that.

What You May Notice

- Dryness or tightness that wasn't there before
- Skin that feels thinner or more sensitive
- Products that used to work now sting or irritate
- Breakouts along the jawline and chin, sometimes for the first time in years
- Flushing that comes and goes
- Dullness, or skin that takes longer to bounce back

What To Do

- Support the barrier first: a gentle cleanser, a hydrating serum, a richer moisturizer and SPF every day.
- Look for ceramides, squalane, and fatty acids in your moisturizer.
- Apply hydrating serums to damp skin and seal them in.
- Introduce actives slowly, one at a time, and give your skin extra time to adjust.
- Fall back on the four-step routine in Section 6 when skin feels reactive.

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Why Skin Changes

Estrogen levels decline over time, and that can affect how well skin holds moisture and how quickly it recovers. Every person's experience is different. What you feel this month may not be what you feel next season, so track what your skin does rather than what you expect it to do.

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MISTAKE

Fighting Changing Skin With More Products

When skin gets dry, dull, or breaks out all at once, the instinct is to add something stronger. A stripped or over-treated barrier tends to make all of it feel worse. Simplify first, then build back.

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TIP

Track the Skin, Not the Calendar

Cycles can become irregular, so Section 7's phases may not line up the way they used to. Use the Barrier Reset Tracker (Section 14) to spot your own patterns, and adjust your active schedule when your skin tells you to.

SECTION 9

Ingredient Decoder

BARRIER-SUPPORTING

Ingredient	What it Does	Where it Fits
Ceramides	Help replenish the barrier's structural lipids	AM + PM moisturizer
Niacinamide	Supports barrier, calms redness	AM serum
Hyaluronic Acid	Draws in and holds moisture	AM + PM, on damp skin
Squalane	Mimics skin's natural oils	PM, dry or reactive skin

USE WITH CARE

Ingredient	What it Does	How to Introduce
Retinol	Supports cell turnover, and the long-term texture	1–2x/week, build slowly
AHA/BHA Acids	Exfoliates, reduces congestion	Alternate nights with retinol, never same night
Vitamin C	Brightens, antioxidant protection	AM, patch test if reactive

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Reading a Concentration

A higher percentage isn't automatically better and it could be a faster path to irritation if your barrier isn't ready for it. Unless otherwise directed, starting a product at the low end of the concentration range is the best practice. Once your skin has tolerated the strength for several weeks, you can consider stepping the concentration strength up.

SECTION 10

Product Selection

Wondering how your products fit into this routine, or whether you're missing a category? A professional skin assessment can be a helpful starting point, but this guide will help you know what to look for. Pay attention to the ingredient list to make sure you're selecting the right items for the purpose.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Cleanser

What to look for: gentle surfactants, low pH.
What to avoid: sulfates high on the ingredient list or foaming formulas that leave skin feeling tight.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Hydrating Serum

What to look for: hyaluronic acid, glycerin, niacinamide. These layer well together and rarely conflict.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Moisturizer

What to look for: ceramides, squalane, fatty acids near the top of the ingredient list. A thicker texture isn't a downside if your barrier needs the support.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

SPF

What to look for: broad-spectrum on the label, zinc oxide or titanium dioxide for reactive skin. Anything you will actually reapply beats the "best" formula you won't.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Active Treatment

What to look for: one (1) active per product, a clear percentage on the label.
What to avoid: stacking multiple actives in one step just because a product markets itself as "multi-tasking".

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TIP

Swapping Products

Only change one product (step) at a time and give it 2-4 weeks before judging it. Swapping the cleanser and the serum in the same week makes it impossible to know which caused a reaction.

SECTION 11

Product Recommendations

These are products that Jillian uses or recommends in-studio. Some links are affiliate links.

MORNING ESSENTIALS

Cleanser	iS CLINICAL Cleansing Complex
Treatment Serum	iS CLINICAL Super Serum Advance+
Toner	Face Reality Calming Toner
Moisturizer	Face Reality Cran-Peptide Cream
SPF	EltaMD UV Clear

EVENING ESSENTIALS

Cleanser	Face Reality Ultra Gentle Cleanser
Toner	Face Reality Calming Toner
Active Treatment	Face Reality l-mandelic Serum
Serum	iS CLINICAL Hydra-Cool Serum
Night Moisturizer	iS CLINICAL Youth Complex

AS NEEDED

Facial Oil	Summer Fridays Heavenly Sixteen Face Oil
Exfoliating Treatment	iS CLINICAL Active Peel System

SECTION 12

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I use retinol and vitamin C together?
Not in the same routine. Vitamin C in the morning, retinol at night, helps both work separately.

How long until I see results?
Barrier repair typically shows within 2-4 weeks. Active ingredient results (texture, tone) take 8-12 weeks of consistent use. Individual results vary.

Is my skin actually barrier-compromised, or just dry?
Dry skin lacks oil. A compromised barrier stings, reacts, and resists hydration even when you're using the right products. When in doubt, book a consultation.

I've used a harsh routine for years, do I really need to change it?
If skin is calm, clear, and not reactive, no. If any of the signs in Section 1 sound familiar, yes, barrier repair is worth the adjustment.

I introduced retinol and now I'm breaking out. Do I stop?
Not necessarily. A temporary adjustment period of 2-4 weeks can happen as cell turnover speeds up. If irritation, burning, or peeling shows up, that is your barrier objecting, so pull back to every-third-night schedule or pause the active entirely until the skin calms. If anything persists, consult your provider.

How do I actually patch test a new product?
Apply a small amount behind the ear or along the jawline for three consecutive nights before adding it to the full face. No reaction after several days (at least three nights) is a reasonable green light. Delayed reactions can occur.

How long should I wait between introducing new products?
One new product at a time, worn for at least two weeks, before adding the next is best practice. Introducing new items or making several changes at once makes it impossible to trace progress or a reaction back to its cause.

My skin got worse after starting a new routine, what now?
Strip back to the four-step compromised-barrier routine in Section 6 first. Once skin is calm for a few weeks, reintroduce one product at a time over the course of several weeks rather than restarting the full routine at once.

SECTION 13

Your Routine

Use this to build your personal routine. If you're unsure, schedule a consult with a licensed esthetician (hopefully us). We'd be delighted to see you.

MY MORNING ROUTINE

Step	Product	Notes
1. Cleanse		
2. Hydrate/Tone		
3. Treat		
4. Moisturize		
5. SPF		

MY EVENING ROUTINE

Step	Product	Notes
1. Cleanse		
2. Toner/Essence		
3. Active Treatment		
4. Serum		
5. Moisturizer		

SECTION 14

Barrier Reset or New Product Tracker

Use this for whenever you're resetting a compromised barrier or introducing a new active. A quick daily note is enough to spot a pattern. Always stop if irritation or reaction is severe and consult your provider.

Day	Reset	New Product (list)	Tightness	Redness	Breakouts	Notes
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						
21						



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Book a consultation in studio or virtually to build your barrier-first routine with us.

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