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YOUNGER-LOOKING SKIN ON A BUDGET

By COLETTE BOUCHEZ

THERE are enough anti-aging advances out there to stop the clock — and at high enough prices to stop you from buying them.

But before you frown (and fork out for Botox to smooth your brow), skin-care experts say you can get many of the same benefits for a lot less.

"They're not going to take the place of professional medical treatments, but you really can buy some very good and very effective products without spending a lot of money," says Dr. David Goldberg, director of the Skin & Laser Surgery Specialists of New York and New Jersey and a professor at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

And while the less expensive products aren't identical to their pricier counterparts, "in many instances," he says, "the core substances are going

to be very similar."

The key is knowing which ingredients to look for — then comparing labels to see what (and how much of it) you're getting.

"You want to look not only for the target ingredient, but that it's in a relatively similar place on both ingredient labels," says Dr. Sumayah Jamal, a dermatologist and associate professor at NYU.

That said, those with super-dry skin or acne may want to pop for the more expensive products, since the firms that make them tend to be more selective when it comes to secondary ingredients like preservatives.

With that in mind, here's what to look for:

L-Ascorbic Acid (Vitamin C)

What it does: Protects against sun damage.

Big bucks: Cellex High C Potency Serum (\$90); Skin Ceuticals Vitamin C Serum (\$115)

Beauty bargain: Signature Club A Adrienne Arpel Advanced Formula Double Strength Vitamin C (\$26.50)

Palmitoyal pentapeptide- 3

What it does: Repairs sun-damaged skin, improves wrinkles and skin texture.

Big bucks: Strivectin SD (\$135)

Beauty bargain: Olay Regenerist Serum (\$17.99)

Acetyl Hexapeptide 3 (a k a "argireline")

What it does: Used daily, it acts somewhat like Botox, relaxing muscles underneath the wrinkles so skin looks smoother and younger.

Big bucks: Avotone Wrinkle Cream (\$89); Kin-

erase C6 Peptide Intensive Treatment (\$96)

Beauty bargain: Principal Secret "Reclaim Starter Kit" (\$25)

Retinol

What it does: A derivative of vitamin A, it helps stimulate collagen production, reduces lines and wrinkles

Big bucks: Estée Lauder Diminish Anti-Wrinkle Retinol Treatment (\$78)

Beauty bargain: Avon's Anew Line Eliminator (\$16); Signature Club A Adrienne Arpel Retinol 12 Topical Capsules (\$29.50)

Caviar

What it does: Moisturizes and firms (when you're not eating it)

Big bucks: La Prairie Skin Caviar Luxury Crème (\$300)

Beauty bargain: Signature Club A Adrienne Arpel Caviar Extreme Topical Capsules (\$29.50)