what is sensory irritation? understanding the difference between sensitive, reactive, and sensitized skin



Sensitive skin isn't just about visible redness. It's also about how skin feels. Learn what sensory irritation is, what causes reactive skin, and how to support a compromised skin barrier.

story highlights

- Sensory irritation refers to the uncomfortable sensations skin feels – including itching, stinging, and tightness.
- Sensitive skin, reactive skin, and sensitized skin overlap and can exist together.
- Stabilizing Repair Serum immediately relieves signs of sensory irritation while helping support skin's barrier.

When people think about sensitive skin, they often focus on visible redness. But for many people experiencing reactive or eczema-prone skin, sensitivity is just as much about how skin *feels* as how it looks.

Stinging after cleansing. Tightness that lingers all day. Itching, heat sensations, or discomfort when applying products. These experiences are known as **sensory irritation** — and they can happen before the visible signs of sensitive skin appear.

what is sensory irritation?

Sensory irritation refers to the immediate sensations associated with skin discomfort, including:

- Itching
- Stinging
- Tightness
- Burning sensations
- Reactive discomfort

These sensations are often an early sign that skin's barrier is stressed or compromised.

sensitive skin vs. sensitized skin vs. reactive skin

These terms are connected – but they are not exactly the same!

- **Sensitive skin** is generally considered an inherent skin type that reacts more easily to triggers like climate, ingredients, or friction.
- **Sensitized skin** is temporary, and happens when skin's barrier becomes disrupted.
- **Reactive skin** often describes skin that quickly responds to stressors through visible redness, discomfort, or irritation.

Sensory irritation can occur in sensitive, sensitized, or reactive skin, and refers specifically to what skin feels like in the moment.

There's often overlap. Someone with sensitive skin may experience reactive flare-ups and sensory irritation – and even resilient skin can become temporarily sensitized under stress. What matters most isn't putting your skin into a perfect category, but recognizing what it's experiencing in the moment so you can support it properly.

what causes sensory irritation?

One of the most common causes of sensory irritation is barrier disruption.

Common triggers include:

- Over-exfoliation
- Overuse of active ingredients
- Environmental stress like heat, cold, wind, and pollution
- Dehydration and moisture loss
- Stress and lack of sleep
- Aggressive skin care routines

When skin's barrier is compromised, it becomes more vulnerable to discomfort, dryness, and reactivity. That's why reactive skin often benefits from a routine focused on stabilization and barrier support.

Focus on:

- Hydration
- Barrier-supporting ingredients
- Soothing skin care
- Reducing unnecessary exfoliation

Supporting skin's barrier helps skin feel calmer, more resilient, and better able to recover from irritation.

how Stabilizing Repair Serum helps support reactive skin



Stabilizing Repair Serum was developed for reactive and irritated skin to help immediately relieve signs of sensory irritation of face + body, including itching, stinging, and tightness.*

It combines soothing and barrier-supporting ingredients including:

- **Colloidal Oatmeal** to help relieve itching and moisturize to reduce tightness
- A **Biomimetic Complex** with ceramide-like compounds to help nourish skin and seal in moisture
- A **Cooling Sensory Blend** with **Northern Truffle Mushroom Extract** to help comfort skin
- **Resurrection Plant** and **prebiotic Glycerin** to help hydrate and support skin resilience

understanding how skin feels matters

Skin sensitivity isn't only about visible irritation; it's also about discomfort, tightness, stinging, and reactivity. Paying attention to how your skin feels can help you better understand when it needs support, stabilization, and barrier care.

If your skin frequently feels reactive or uncomfortable, talk to a Professional Skin Therapist. They can help identify potential triggers and recommend a routine that supports long-term skin health – without overwhelming your barrier.

*Results after 30 minutes. Based on a consumer perception evaluation within a clinical study, 2 applications/day for 4 weeks.

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