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## The youth jab: Scientists claim to have created a serum that inoculates against ageing. Surely it just can't be true?

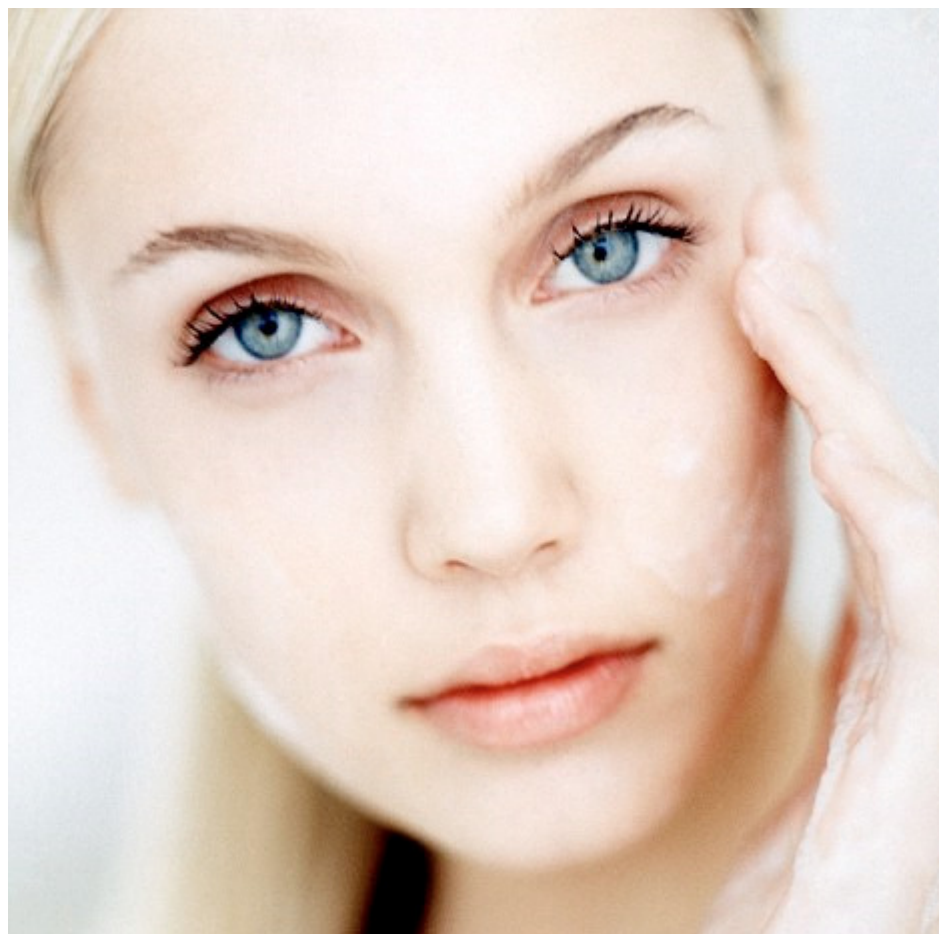
By [Claire Coleman](#)

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Can it be possible to vaccinate your skin against the ageing process in the same way that you can vaccinate a child against measles? French beauty brand Givenchy says yes, and claims its latest product, Vax'in For Youth, does exactly that.

While it's a serum not a syringe, Givenchy say that the science behind it mimics the mechanism of a conventional vaccine.

Vaccinations work by introducing a small amount of disease into the body; enough to stimulate the body to produce antibodies to tackle it and give natural immunity, but not enough to cause the disease.



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**Breakthrough: Givenchy claims Vax'in For Youth, vaccinates your skin against the ageing process in the same way that you can vaccinate a child against measles**

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In this instance, the theory is that if you can trick skin cells into thinking they are being damaged, their response will be to produce compounds that boost the skin's resistance to damage and thus slow down the rate at which it ages.

It's a seductive proposition and a revolutionary way of approaching the ageing process. And it's based on solid science.

Givenchy has been working with Professor Suresh Rattan, a biogerontologist whose work looks at the biology of ageing. He runs the Laboratory of Cellular Ageing in the molecular biology department of the University of Aarhus, in Denmark.



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**Elixir: While Vaxin is a serum not a syringe, Givenchy say that the science behind it mimics the mechanism of a conventional vaccine**

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His views are very different from those usually posited by the beauty industry.

'Science cannot make you immortal. Science cannot perform miracles,' he says. 'From a biological perspective, all aspects of all organisms - brain, muscles, bone, skin - decline with age, but it is possible to slow this decline

Until recently, anti-ageing concentrated on identifying the factors - such as UV rays, environmental pollutants and unhealthy lifestyles - that accelerate the rate at which cells age, and looked at how best to protect the body from them.

However, Professor Rattan's research suggests that the body has an in-built protection system which is triggered by putting it under stress.

In experiments on human cells, including skin cells, those subjected to 'stress', in the form of high temperatures, for short periods appeared to age more slowly, live longer and function better than those left at a normal temperature.

When he looked at why this was the case, he found that subjecting cells to 'stress' seemed to stimulate them to produce protective compounds.

Inspired by this work, Givenchy theorised that if it were possible to apply a cream that would simulate 'stress' like this, the skin cells would produce these compounds that would help protect the skin.'

After testing a number of ingredients, they settled on sanchi, a ginseng extract, and hypotaurine, a protein naturally present in the body.

In a test tube, these ingredients were shown to increase production of the protective compounds by 24 per cent in just six hours.

Which in theory is great. But does it translate to younger skin in real life?

The serum, which is £60 for 30ml, is pleasant to use, leaving skin sweetly fragranced and soft.

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But while Givenchy claims its tests show the product 'reinforces tone and elasticity' and 'slows wrinkle formation', it tested the product on only 32 women over a four-week period and hasn't published its work in a peer-reviewed journal.

Laurent Nogueira, the company's scientific director, says that its research is still at an early stage: 'We know that in order for our products to be credible, we need to carry out longer-term tests on more subjects and we will do that. But for now, we're satisfied that our studies show that Vax'in is doing something at both a cellular level and at a level which is visible on the skin.'

But what does an independent expert make of these findings?

'From a scientific point of view this is absolutely fascinating and opens up an entirely new approach to skincare,' says Dr Chris Flower, of the Cosmetic Toiletry and Perfumery Association (CTPA).

'The ideas are definitely sound, but at the moment it's difficult to say whether the science translates to the product, and whether any of the effects are long-lasting or extensive.'

For me, that means the jury's still out. While it's incredibly exciting that a beauty company are using such cutting-edge science in a product, its evidence needs to be far more robust if it is to convince sceptics like myself that it has found a vaccine for youth.

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- Mazzy, Manchester, 09/9/2010 02:11

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it isnt supple skin that makes young people fun to be around. You cant inoculate against being a miserable old git.

- tony, lancs, 07/9/2010 23:20

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If it's too good to be true ...

- John Ballard, Nottingham, UK, 07/9/2010 15:28

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