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HOW NATALIE FINALLY GOT RID OF HER ADULT ACNE

Your
Dermatologist
Knows

Patient story

HOW NATALIE FINALLY GOT RID OF HER ADULT ACNE

Natalie Elliott had had acne before. In high school, pimples, blackheads, and whiteheads dotted her face. When store-bought acne products didn't work, she saw a dermatologist. By the time she was 18 and ready to leave home for college, her skin was clear. It stayed acne free for years.

Then when she was in her early 20's, Natalie developed cystic acne. This type of acne causes cysts (pus-filled pimples) that lodge deep in the skin. The cysts can be painful and large. When they clear, acne scars often appear.



“

It's been a long journey to get my acne under control. Knowing that Dr. Graber felt confident in the treatment plan helped me have patience. I felt like Dr. Graber and I were a team in the fight against my acne.

”

— *Natalie Elliott, patient*

The cysts started on her cheeks, but it wasn't long before she saw acne breakouts on her jawline and neck. She also developed cystic acne on her back.

At that point, Natalie recalls, “The lower half of my face was covered with acne.”

Natalie was surprised to have acne again and focused on getting rid of it. She tried numerous products.

Natalie recalled, “I'd exfoliate almost every day. You just want to scrub it off. I was using clay masks and everything that I could buy that could clear acne.” No matter what she tried, the acne remained.

“I felt really hopeless when my acne got this out of control. It was so hard to forget that I had acne. I'd be at a party hanging out, and I couldn't stop thinking about my acne,” Natalie shared.

As Natalie watched her acne worsen, she felt that she'd have severe acne for the rest of her life. That was when she realized that the acne was affecting her mental health.

Natalie said, “At times, my skin made me feel so frustrated and angry. I'd fixate on my pimples and try to pop them, which, of course, made the acne worse. I was caught in a vicious cycle.”

Those feelings carried over into her social life. “Sometimes I'd get so frustrated with having acne that I cancel my plans and stay home. The breakouts made me feel self-conscious when meeting new people. When I had a bad breakout, my personality changed. I felt timid,” Natalie said.

Natalie wasn't alone in feeling this way. Board-certified dermatologists know that even if a skin condition is not life-threatening, it may reduce a person's quality of life, causing loss of sleep, poor self-image, serious depression, or lost productivity.

Dr. Graber listened to Natalie's concerns

When her acne was at its worst, Natalie moved to Boston.

This move brought many positive changes, which included seeing board-certified dermatologist Emmy Graber, MD, FAAD.



When treating a patient with adult acne, I'm hyperalert to how acne bothers them. I listen for remarks like 'embarrassed at work,' 'uncomfortable meeting clients,' or 'I'm self-conscious in a people-facing job.'



— Board-certified dermatologist Emmy Graber, MD, FAAD

When Dr. Graber hears words which indicate that acne is really bothering a patient, she says, "It sounds like this is really affecting your work." Then she talks about the different treatment options for acne, such as pills, medications applied to the skin, and laser procedures.

The patient's verbal and non-verbal responses to this information give her an idea as to how much the acne bothers a patient emotionally, how aggressive the patient wants to be with treating it, and which treatments interest a patient.

Natalie recalls, "Dr. Graber validated my feelings during our first appointment. She prescribed a treatment plan and explained how long it would take for me to start seeing results. I started taking [spironolactone](#), and [isotretinoin](#) was also in my treatment plan for a while."

"Once I started seeing results, I saw a light at the end of the tunnel," Natalie said. She felt so relieved because she was engaged to get married.

"When taking wedding photos, I wouldn't have to worry about reapplying my makeup beforehand or making sure that I stood a certain way. I could be in the moment, so that was a complete change. Not worrying about breaking out on my wedding day was huge," she added.

Are you living with unstoppable adult acne?

Today, virtually everyone with adult acne can have clearer skin. If you're struggling with adult acne, Dr. Graber and Natalie offer this guidance to help you gain control:

1. **See a board-certified dermatologist.** Dr. Graber finds that adults often feel that they shouldn't have acne. Their own lives may revolve around caring for others and they feel that they cannot take time out to care for a skin problem.

Both Dr. Graber and Natalie encourage you to seek help. Natalie says, "You don't have to go it alone." That's why she recommends making an appointment to see a board-certified dermatologist. This doctor can explain available treatment options and find one that works best for you.

She also encourages you to find a board-certified dermatologist whom you want to work with long term. "With Dr. Graber, anything that bothered me, bothered her. I felt that I could work with her," Natalie recalled.

2. **Advocate for yourself.** When you advocate for yourself, you ask for what you want and need. You speak up for yourself. Natalie said, "I didn't know that I should advocate for myself." She didn't know that she should tell Dr. Graber how important it was for her to have clear skin.

Dr. Graber says that it's important for patients to let their dermatologist know what they expect from treatment. While your expectations may not always be realistic, it's important for your dermatologist to know what you expect.

3. Tell your dermatologist (in just a few sentences) how adult acne is affecting your life. Dr. Graber says this is often all a dermatologist needs to know to figure out what you want. Tell your dermatologist something specific. For example, if acne makes you feel embarrassed to meet clients or participate in meetings at work, say that. Dr. Graber adds, "This information can be very helpful."

4. Ask questions, so you know what to expect. Natalie believes that this is essential.

When you ask questions, you learn the facts. There is so much misinformation available today. It can be difficult to know what's true. By asking a dermatologist, the medical expert in the diagnosis and treatment of acne, you learn the facts.

Knowing what to expect can help you make an informed decision about how you want to treat your acne.

5. Make a list of acne treatments that you've tried since you first had breakouts. Dr. Graber recommends making this list before your first appointment, as it can be very helpful in developing an effective treatment plan for you. Everyone's skin is unique, so certain acne treatments work well for some people and not others.

The right acne treatment can improve your life

Natalie recalls, "When I first saw Dr. Graber, my acne was the worst it had ever been." Once Natalie's acne started clearing, her life improved in so many ways.

To find a board-certified dermatologist in your area, visit [Find a dermatologist](#).

Images

Courtesy of Natalie Elliott and Emmy Graber, MD, FAAD

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