

Acne and Skin Care



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Acne is caused by blockages formed in your pores. Contrary to popular belief, pores are not blocked by outside dirt; they are blocked by your own cells. The pores in your body are used to excrete sebum, oil that carries dead cells from the body. For reasons as yet unknown, some pores get blocked by sebum instead of excreting it. This causes a backup of oil and dead cells, resulting in acne.

Diet, hormones, stress, genetics, and many other factors have been blamed for acne. Currently, there is no solid scientific data on what is the root cause. Hormones and genetics have been linked, but all that is known is that teenagers tend to get acne and if your parents had acne, chances are you will too.

Types of Acne

Non-inflammatory acne

- *Whitehead* – Smaller white bump formed when the trapped sebum stays below the skin's surface.
- *Blackhead* – Smaller black circle formed when the sebum is open to air, which causes the dead skin cells to turn black.

Inflammatory acne

- *Papule* – Larger red bump formed when the skin around a blocked pore is damaged and your body reacts with the inflammation response. Usually tender to touch.
- *Pustule* – Larger red bump with white pus on top. Usually the next step after a papule.

Myth: Acne only strikes in the teenage years.

Fact: Unfortunately, adult acne is more common than you think and many people struggle with it throughout their adult years.

Home Remedies

Although not proven scientifically, many home remedies for acne exist.

Typical home remedies include:

- Toothpaste,
- Garlic,
- Apple cider vinegar,
- Honey, and
- Tea tree oil.

These remedies are usually suggested for spot treatments.

Tips to avoid making your acne worse:

- Do not pop or pick at pimples,

- Only wash your face once a day,
- If you shave, change your blade often or try a different type of razor,
- If you wear makeup, clean your brush often and look for noncomedogenic cosmetics,
- Use medication as directed -- using more will not make it work faster,
- If you use hair products containing oil, keep your hair away from your face,
- Change your pillowcase often, and
- Avoid prolonged exposure to sunlight.

Eat Well

Eating well has so many benefits. Eating a variety of healthy foods each day means having plenty of vegetables and fruits, having enough protein, and choosing whole-grain foods for carbs. Follow the Canada Food Guide for eating well tips and recipes.

Mask-Wearing

To keep your skin healthy while wearing a face mask, try

- Using a cloth mask

- Avoid wearing makeup under the mask
- Never re-use masks
- Stay hydrated and moisturize

Treatment

In **over-the-counter cleansers and lotions**, look for ingredients like:

- Salicylic acid,
- Benzoyl Peroxide, and
- Retin-A.

Prescribed lotions often include:

- Clindamycin,
- Erythromycin,
- Sodium sulfacetamide,
- Adapalene, and
- Azelaic acid.

Prescribed pills include:

- Spironolactone (Oral contraceptives),
- Doxycycline (Antibiotics), and
- Accutane.

Finding Your Solution

If your acne is mild you may want to try some over the counter cleansers and lotions, which can be found in any pharmacy or grocery store.

If that does not work or if your acne is more severe, make an appointment

with a doctor to discuss prescribed options. Dermatologists are your best bet, but many other doctors are also experienced with treating acne.

Myth: You must dry out your skin by washing it several times a day.

Fact: Drying out your skin is not the solution; it only causes your body to create more oil. Wash your face no more than twice a day and always follow with a facial moisturizer.

Myth: Many people believe that exposure to sunlight helps to get rid of acne.

Fact: Although small doses of sun may be beneficial, large doses of sun and tanning is damaging to the skin and can cause severe long term effects.

Sun

Although a little bit of sun may help your acne, and you may feel that getting a tan helps to hide any imperfections, the risks are not worth it. Don't be one of the thousands of Canadians diagnosed with skin cancer this year.

Worried about a mole? Check it for the following features, easily remembered as the ABCD of malignant melanoma:

- **Asymmetry:** the shape is not the same on both sides.

- **Border:** edge is irregular, ragged, and indistinct.
- **Colour:** may range from brown to black and have areas of red, grey, or white.
- **Diameter:** increase or growth in width.

Protecting Yourself

Sun protection is easy and does not have to cost a lot.

Try:

- Wearing more clothing to cover skin,
- Wearing a hat,
- Staying in the shade,
- Wearing sunglasses, or
- Wearing sunscreen with an SPF of at least 25.

Remember to:

- Check the UV Index before going out (three or higher requires precautions),
- Avoid direct sunlight when the sun's rays are the strongest, between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.,
- Apply sunscreen at least 20 minutes prior to sun exposure, and
- Remind your friends!

Moisturize

To keep your skin healthy, a good moisturizer is essential, even if you have oily skin. If you continually dry out your skin with face wash, sun, or medication, your skin will retaliate and get worse. Whether you have dry, oily, or combination skin, you will be able to find a moisturizer that suits your needs.

Moisturizers are made of the following three ingredients:

- 1. Humectants** – Attract water and help skin retain moisture.
 - Glycerin,
 - Lactic acid, and
 - Carboxylic acid.
- 2. Emollients** – Soften and soothe cracks in skin.
 - Fatty acids and
 - Ceramides.
- 3. Occlusive** – Seal in moisture by creating a protective barrier.
 - Petrolatum,
 - Lanolin, and
 - Silicone.

The amount of each ingredient varies depending on the specific problem the moisturizer is intended.

Dry skin? Try a moisturizer with more emollient ingredients.
Oily skin? Avoid occlusive.

Additional Resources

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