
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Having acne



This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Beth

And I'm Beth. As a society, we're obsessed with our skin. But the pursuit of perfect skin can make life difficult for people who struggle with skin conditions.

Neil

'Spots', 'zits' or 'pimples' – there are many names for the red, inflamed marks which appear on the face and neck, but the medical term is acne. Acne is a skin condition which can affect anyone. It often happens between the ages of 14 and 19, but can continue into adulthood. There are many types of acne from blackheads and whiteheads to more severe forms of cysts and scarring.

Beth

But whatever the type of acne, looking different from others can be emotionally damaging, especially during the teenage years when our self-image and physical appearance are changing. In this programme, we'll be hearing from a skin doctor, or dermatologist, who suffered acne herself. And, as usual, we'll be learning some useful new vocabulary too.

Neil

But first I have a question for you, Beth. Mild or moderate acne is very common in teenagers and younger adults, so according to the UK's National Health Service, what proportion of people aged 11 to 30 experience some amount of acne?

a) 75%?

- b) 85%? or
- c) 95%?

Beth

I'm going to guess that it is c) 95%.

Neil

OK, Beth, we'll find out if that's the correct answer at the end of the programme. Dr Sharon Crichlow is a dermatologist originally from Barbados. As someone who grew up with acne she understands the impact it can have on a person's mental health, as she explains here to BBC World Service programme, The Conversation:

Dr Sharon Crichlow

Well, we know for sure that it does tend to arise from **puberty** onwards, so the biggest cohort of patients is in the teenage age group. However, a proportion of patients up to 20 or so percent - certainly in females - it will persist well into the 30s, 40s - much longer than people often give it credit for. And we also know that it has a huge psychological impact so even mild to moderate acne, because it affects teenagers who are quite **emotionally vulnerable**, it affects their friendships, their peer groups and so it should never really be **trivialised**.

Beth

Acne tends to start during **puberty**, the stage in people's lives when they develop from a child into an adult because of changes in their body. Hormones such as testosterone which are released into the body during puberty often cause acne to appear.

Neil

Of course, puberty involves emotional, as well as physical, changes. Acne can be harder to live with for someone who is **emotionally vulnerable**, meaning someone who gets their feelings hurt easily. Acne affects your confidence and how you interact with the world, so it shouldn't be **trivialised**, or made to seem less important than it really is.

Beth

At times, most teenagers are self-conscious about their looks, and having acne adds to social pressure. Acne is largely genetic, and the buildup of oil and bacteria in the pores of the skin which causes spots is due to hormones which are completely natural.

Neil

Here's Dr Sharon Crichlow, again, telling BBC World Service programme, The Conversation, how her own experience with acne led her to help others with the same problem.

Dr Sharon Crichlow

I didn't have the luxury of being able to see a dermatologist when I was younger - my family just simply couldn't afford it, so I had **to get through it** as best I could... and you just you know tried everything **over the counter** et cetera. I just felt if I could help people with something that has been such a **bane of my life** and having that inside experience as well so I would often tell my patients, pretty much anything I recommend to them, I've tried it myself, I can tell them, it works...

Beth

Growing up, Dr Crichlow didn't have anyone to help her **get through** acne. If you **get through** something, you manage to survive a difficult experience or challenging period in life. Instead, she got whatever medicine she could buy without a doctor's prescription - known as **over the counter** medicines - from her local pharmacy.

Neil

Dr Crichlow calls acne, **the bane of my life**, an idiom meaning the cause of unhappiness or misfortune. But as she grew older and her acne improved, she used her experience to support her patients in the UK.

Beth

For most people acne stops as they grow older, but remember it's completely natural and you're not alone.

Neil

Which reminds me of my question, Beth – what proportion of 11 to 30 year-olds get acne to some extent? You said it was 95%, which was... the correct answer! OK, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **puberty**, the stage of life when a person changes from a child to an adult.

Beth

Someone who is **emotionally vulnerable** has their feelings and emotions easily hurt.

Neil

The verb to **trivialise** means to make something seem less important than it really is.

Beth

If you **get through it**, you manage to survive a difficult experience or period of life.

Neil

Over the counter medicines can be bought in a shop without a doctor's prescription.

Beth

And finally, the idiom, **the bane of my life** refers to a source of persistent unhappiness or misfortune. Once again, our six minutes are up, but remember to join us again next time for more trending topics and useful vocabulary, here at 6 Minute English. Goodbye for now!

Neil

Bye!

VOCABULARY

puberty

stage of life when a person grows from a child into an adult because of changes in the body's sexual reproductive system

emotionally vulnerable

have your feelings and emotions easily hurt

trivialise

make something seem less important than it really is

get through (it)

manage to survive a difficult experience or challenging period of life

over the counter

describes medicine that can be bought in a shop without a doctor's prescription

bane of (my) life

source or cause of persistent unhappiness or misfortune