

Natural Aid for Acne

If you are suffering from a devastating skin condition that causes you to break out in spots, then you are not alone. Acne is a condition that is often linked to adolescents, but many grown adults suffer from it as well. Read on to find out how to bust those spots the natural way...

What is Acne

Acne is a skin disorder which results in spots, white-heads, blackheads and, the most serious form, cysts and abscesses which can leave behind disfiguring pits and scars. Most adolescents suffer from acne at some point, but it is usually mild and often clears up after the teenage years. For some, however, acne is a lifelong worry, and often creeps up at the worst of times. In both adolescents and adults, acne can cause acute distress and sometimes even depression and lowered self-esteem.

Why do I have it

The exact cause of acne is not known, but it is usually caused by over-production of the male hormone testosterone which is produced by both sexes, with women being particularly affected during puberty, menopause and before a menstrual period.

The sebaceous glands are located in each hair follicle and they produce oil that lubricates the skin. These glands are found in high numbers on the face, back, chest and shoulders.

Too much testosterone makes the sebaceous glands work overtime, which causes blocked pores, infection and acne. These overactive oil glands create excess oil that makes the pores sticky, allowing bacteria to become trapped inside. If the oil becomes trapped, bacteria multiply in the follicle and the skin becomes inflamed.

Factors that can contribute to acne:

- Heredity
- Oily skin
- Allergies
- Stress
- Use of certain drugs (e.g. steroids, contraceptives)
- Dietary choices (e.g. over- consumption of junk food, dairy products, saturated fats, hydrogenated fats, and animal products)
- Nutritional deficiencies such as a lack in vitamin A or zinc
- Exposure to industrial pollutants
- Use of cosmetics
- Monthly menstrual cycle
- Over-washing or repeated rubbing of the skin
- A body pH that is too high (too alkaline) also fosters the nesting and breeding of acne-causing bacteria

Eat for healthier skin

- Eat a diet that is high in **fibre**, as it is important for keeping the colon clean and ridding the body of toxins.
- Increase intake of **raw foods, fruits and vegetables** to ensure the supply of vitamins and minerals
- Include **essential fatty acids** in the diet on a daily basis. These are found in raw nuts and seeds and their oils, oily fish, and green leafy vegetables
- Eat more foods rich in **zinc** because it is an antibacterial agent and a necessary element in the oil-producing glands of the skin. Zinc-rich foods include shellfish, soybeans, wholegrains, sunflower seeds and raw nuts.
- Also increase foods rich in **B vitamins**, especially B₆, which may help alleviate the type of acne that appears at times of the monthly cycle. These include wholegrains, green leafy vegetables and cruciferous vegetables (such as broccoli and cabbage)
- **Vitamin E** foods also help reduce scarring often caused by acne. These foods include nuts, seeds, avocados, and wheatgerm.

- Eat plenty of **soured products** (e.g. low-fat live yoghurt and miso) to maintain healthy intestinal flora.
- Increase intake of **water** to hydrate skin and eliminate toxins. Try to have at least 2 litres of water each day.
- Foods should be **steamed or grilled** rather than fried or roasted.
- Avoid **dairy products**, as they are a culprit in almost all skin conditions and promote inflammation
- Avoid **junk food** diets
- Avoid **saturated fats and hydrogenated fats** found in most animal products and some margarines
- Reduce all forms of **sugar** (e.g. chocolate) and **processed foods** in the diet because it impairs the immune system and aggravates skin conditions
- **Caffeine and alcohol** also have a tendency to exacerbate acne for their dehydrating effects and sugar content

Change your lifestyle

- Get regular moderate **exercise** (at least 20 minutes, 3 times a week)
- Address any **stress** in your life by either reducing it or implementing stress management techniques such as yoga, meditation, massage, or even just listening to music
- Practice careful **hygiene**. Wash face twice daily with a mild, unscented soap.
- Avoid the use of **creams and lotions** that will block the follicles and promote acne formation. Instead, use natural emollients such as vitamin E or Aloe Vera face creams.
- Wash **hair** frequently and avoid letting it hang down over the face, especially if it tends to be greasy
- Do not have **facials or steam baths** for severe acne as this can have the effect of bringing spots out. High humidity aggravates acne
- Try to spend some time in the **sun** but avoid getting sunburned. This can help clear up a mild outbreak of acne.

Some natural creams and moisturisers that you can use for your skin

- Aloe Vera Gel can be great for spots, wrinkles, burns, or scars. It is best applied at night because it may flake. Make sure your Aloe Vera gel contains close to 100% Aloe. Apply a heavy coating before bed.
- Vitamin E creams are great as moisturisers because they are light and can be used anytime in the day. They work well with spots and stretch marks.
- Grapeseed oil can work well on the skin as a healer, moisturiser, and natural exfoliator. Apply and thin layer of pure grapeseed oil to your skin before bed.
- Zinc-based creams work wonders with scars and wounds. They also help with rashes or itchy skin. Make sure your zinc cream contains zinc as one of the top 4 ingredients.

There are also other factors, besides the diet, to look into when considering the health of your skin. Stress, alcohol, and smoking are skin's worst enemies. While exercise, sleep, and meditation are guaranteed to give your skin a boost.

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