

Break Free from Acne Breakouts

The Facts for a Clear Complexion

Cathy Ulrich

A scourge of teenagers and adults alike, acne is one of the least understood of all skin conditions--and one of the most common. Usually associated with youth, acne can last well into the adult years and sometimes throughout life. It's tough to treat, especially if approached as a dirty skin problem. And if not cared for properly, acne can produce scarring on the face and body that is difficult, if not impossible, to clear.

Let's look at some of the myths surrounding acne and replace them with the facts.

MYTH: ANY SKIN CONDITION THAT CAUSES PIMPLES, BLACKHEADS, AND REDNESS IS A FORM OF ACNE.

It, too, can cause whiteheads, tiny pimples, and redness.

Gram negative folliculitis also looks like severe acne, producing pustules and deep cysts, but it's caused by a different kind of bacteria than common acne. This is a severe skin infection requiring medical treatment. It's usually the result of long-term tetracycline or topical antibiotic use, which sets up an environment for drug resistant bacteria. It can be treated with proper testing and administration of gram negative-specific antibiotics. It's important to see a dermatologist for appropriate testing and diagnosis before assuming that your skin condition is common acne.



Acne-free skin can be accomplished with the right products and treatments for your complexion.

FACT: THERE ARE OTHER CONDITIONS THAT LOOK LIKE ACNE BUT AREN'T.

Several other skin conditions look like acne. Rosacea is a hereditary skin condition that causes redness and can eventually develop tiny whiteheads and pimples if left untreated. Contact dermatitis can occur when the skin is exposed to harsh soaps or even sheets or pillowcases washed in harsh chemicals.

MYTH: IF I HAVE ACNE, IT MEANS MY SKIN IS DIRTY. I SHOULD USE A STRONGER CLEANSER.

FACT: HARSH CLEANSERS AND EXCESSIVE WASHING CAN MAKE ACNE WORSE.

It's true that excessive oil on the skin can clog pores, but harsh cleansers and soaps will irritate the skin, making acne worse. Use a mild cleanser that doesn't dry your

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*Forget not that
the earth
delights to feel
your bare feet
and the winds
long to play
with your hair.*

-Kahlil Gibran

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skin. Wash twice a day--before applying makeup in the morning and before bed. It's essential to cleanse your skin prior to going to sleep to remove makeup, dirt, and pollutants. Use a makeup that is water-based and noncomedogenic (non-clogging), and avoid cold creams or lotions that leave a greasy film. Your skin care professional is trained to evaluate your skin type and offer guidance about proper daily skin care and products. Consult your esthetician about the skin care and makeup that's right for you.

MYTH: EATING CHOCOLATE AND FRIED FOODS MAKES ME BREAK OUT.

FACT: A HEALTHY DIET GREATLY CONTRIBUTES TO HEALTHY SKIN, BUT EATING FOODS, SUCH AS CHOCOLATE, DOESN'T BY ITSELF CAUSE ACNE BREAKOUTS.

Research has never been able to prove that eating specific foods--even fried foods--causes acne. However, certain foods may aggravate it. On the other hand, eating a healthy diet contributes to better skin, especially foods rich in beta-carotene, such as spinach, apricots, peaches, sweet potatoes, and carrots. These provide the raw materials for the body to produce vitamin A, which is essential for cell growth and skin health. Citrus, tomatoes, and berries contain vitamin C, a powerful antioxidant that strengthens the immune system and helps the body fight bacteria that can cause acne. A healthy diet provides the building blocks for healthier skin, but eating chocolate or sweets occasionally won't cause acne flare-ups.

MYTH: SUNBATHING CLEARS ACNE.

FACT: WHILE LIMITED EXPOSURE TO UV RAYS FROM THE SUN MAY HELP CLEAR EXISTING PIMPLES, EXTENDED EXPOSURE CAN MAKE ACNE WORSE.

Extended sun exposure can damage skin, causing peeling and flaking, which translates into blocked pores--a primary cause of acne. In addition, sunbathing dries skin, which stimulates oil production. This excess oil combines with extra dead skin cells from sun damage, setting up the perfect environment for blocked pores and breakouts. Ask your esthetician about oil-free sunscreen products for your specific skin type and use them daily. You'll not only help reduce acne, you'll prevent skin damage that causes wrinkles as well.

MYTH: I'LL GROW OUT OF IT.

FACT: HALF OF ALL ADULT WOMEN AND ONE-FOURTH OF ALL ADULT MEN HAVE SOME DEGREE OF ACNE SYMPTOMS.

While it's more common in teenagers, acne is prevalent in adults as well. Some people make it through their teenage years only to develop acne later in life. The hormone changes experienced during pregnancy can cause adult-onset acne, but other conditions--the use of certain medications, exposure to chemicals, and other hormonal changes experienced in adulthood--can also produce acne symptoms long after adolescence.

MYTH: I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS MY COMPLICATED SKIN.

FACT: YOUR ESTHETICIAN CAN HELP.

Your esthetician may recommend you see a dermatologist to help correctly diagnose and treat your skin condition, and she can certainly help direct you in

the best ways to help support a healthy complexion. By guiding you to the right skin care products and makeup and teaching you how to use them, your skin care professional can be an important part of your team. Monthly facials specifically designed to gently cleanse and exfoliate your skin will also aid in healing and prevention.

Acne requires special attention in your daily skin care regimen and lifestyle. Let your esthetician support you in this journey to health through regular treatments and sound education.



Ask your esthetician about proper face washing techniques--a key component in treating acne.

Massage for Your Teenager?

Bodywork Can Ease Adolescent Angst

While teens may be less likely than their parents to go to a massage therapist, there are plenty of reasons why this age group should be encouraged to give it a try. The benefits of massage are well documented, among them relief of muscle tension, lowered stress hormones, increased sense of relaxation, improved immune function, and even a heightened ability to concentrate, according to studies conducted by the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine. But for teenagers, there's an additional payback.

The teenage body is in the midst of transformation -- exponential growth and development in a rapid period of time. On the physical side, teens may be at increased risk for aches, pains, and injury. Many teens strain their bodies with competitive sports, get erratic sleep, and consume a less-than-optimal diet. Massage can help muscles recover from overuse, and help balance the body and maintain that stability.

Perhaps even more crucial, teen massage can help improve body image and sleep patterns, and contribute to decreased depression, anxiety, and stress. This keeps a teen connected to her body, even as it morphs in confounding ways. "Many teens are self-conscious, and not happy with their bodies," says Eeris Kallil, massage therapist and shiatsu instructor at the Boulder College of Massage Therapy, in Colorado. "Massage can help teens stay grounded." Bodywork has also been reported to help mediate eating disorders, a growing concern among teens.

Another potential plus: A beneficial, therapeutic relationship can develop between bodyworkers and teenagers during the years when adolescents need adult confidantes, but keep parents at a distance. The practitioner can become a supportive, trusted adult in a teen's life. And the session itself, according to Kallil, can be a way to deal with all the physical and emotional turmoil of this tender age.



Massage eases teen depression and anxiety.

Hot or Cold for Injuries?

How to Know Which is Best for You

Art Riggs

We all know that treating an injury immediately after it happens can help minimize the pain and damage as well as facilitate recovery. But after rolling your ankle in a soccer game, or hurting your back when lifting your toddler, or tweaking your knee when stepping out of your car, what's best? Should you ice it to try to control inflammation, or would heat be better to promote circulation?

While it's difficult to establish a fail-safe rule for when to apply ice or heat, the general directive is to use ice for the first forty-eight to seventy-two hours after an acute injury and then switch to heat.

It Depends

The reality is that many conditions are not necessarily the result of a specific

injury. I call these conditions "recurrent acute" and find them by far the most common: sciatica that occurs when you drive a car; a back that flare up every time you garden; or tennis elbow from intense computer work. In these cases, consistent and frequent applications of ice may prove very helpful over long periods of time, particularly immediately after experiencing the event that causes problems.

Conversely, back or other muscle spasms caused by overexertion rather than injury may benefit greatly from heat immediately upon the onset of symptoms or immediately after exercise in order to relax the muscles and increase circulation. Also, muscle belly pain not resulting from acute and

serious trauma generally responds well to heat, which can break the spasms and release the strain. On the other hand, nerve and tendon pain--regardless of the duration of symptoms, even if you've been experience them for months--benefit from ice.

What Works for You

The bottom line: different individuals will constitutionally vary greatly in their reactions. Some people are more prone to the types of inflammation exacerbated by heat, while others find their bodies contracting and tightening at the mere mention of ice. Try each option and pay close attention to how your body and mind respond, and let your gut be your guide. Ultimately, what works best for you is, well, what's best for you.

He who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed.

-Albert Einstein

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