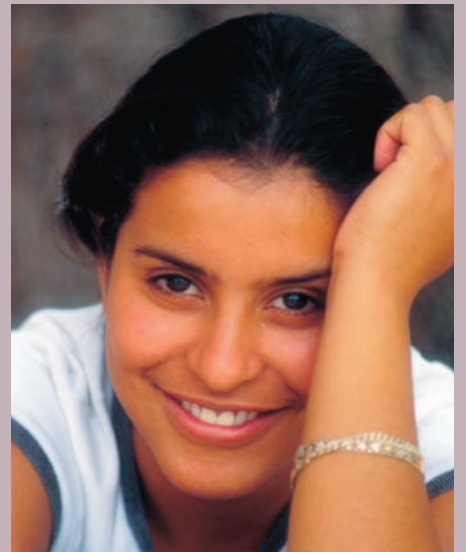
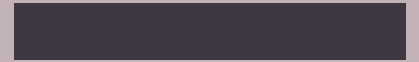


# A Woman's Guide To Total Acne Control

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...And These Are The  
Zits of Our Lives

# The First Step To Curing Acne

The first step to curing acne is knowing what type of acne you have. This information gives you precious insight to what may have actually triggered the acne outset. Once you know your acne trigger, you are one step closer to removing the acne activator and living acne free.

There are numerous types of acne, which could explain why it is so cumbersome if not seemingly impossible for the acne sufferer to find a cure. Looking at the list below, you may be surprised discover that your acne is not caused by stress, but your new bottle of designer perfume.

**Adult Acne** Sudden onset, or continuation of acne, during adulthood. The cause may be hormone imbalances, stress, pollution or medications. Studies have shown a direct link between hormone imbalances and the onset of acne in women ages 30 to 40 years old.

**Acne cosmetic** This form may be rare but is triggered by use of cosmetics with acne aggravating ingredients such as lanolins, isopropyl myristate and some pigments.

**Acne conglobata** Severe hereditary acne that can cause scarring on the face and back.

**Acne detergens** Acne resulting from abrasive cleansers.

**Acne excoriée (Mirror Addict Acne)**- Psychosomatic disease caused by constant picking of the face and/or body.

**Acne fulminans (Too Much Testosterone Acne)** Acute and severe form of acne accompanied by symptoms like fever and joint pain. This acne is common among males. Traits include: abrupt onset of acne, inflammatory and ulcerated nodular acne on the chest and back, severe acne scarring, fluctuating fever, painful joints, loss of appetite or weight, and high white blood cell count. This acne is caused by use of testosterone, used legally or illegally to enhance muscle growth. Over the counter treatments are not effective. If you don't need the extra testosterone for your health, don't take it.

*“There are numerous types of acne, which could explain why it is so cumbersome if not seemingly impossible for the acne sufferer to find a cure. “*

**Acne keloidalis** This acne occurs with people of African descent. It is characterized by firm papules and pustules at the nape of the neck.

**Acne mallorca** Acne caused by sunbathing.

**Acne mechanica** Acne provoked by mechanical irritation such as tight, restricting cloths or straps.

**Acne medicamentosa** (Drug Induced Acne) Acne brought on by medications. Common culprits include phenytoin (Dilantin), isoniazid, lithium, bromides, iodides, androgens and corticosteroids. Lithium worsens acne vulgaris and can bring on acne in persons who have never experienced acne.

**Oral contraceptives** containing norgestrel or norethindrone may also induce or worsen acne.

Over the counter drugs containing potassium iodide, bromide (cold remedies) and chlorine (chloral hydrate) may cause acne with very small pustules.

**Acne neonatorum** Infant acne triggered by hormones from the mother transferred to the newborn. This acne usually disappears without treatment.

**Acne pomade** Acne occurring with persons who use pomades or thick oils daily on their hair. This oil travels from the hair to the forehead where it clogs pores and creates acne lesions. Avoiding touching the face with oiled hands and limiting use of synthetic oils on the hairs usually remedies pomade acne.

**Chloracne** Acne created by constant exposure to hydrocarbons in motor oil and insecticides.

**Imaginary acne** Imagining acne when there is actually no acne.

**Pitch acne** Lesions created by coal tars or dandruff tar shampoos.

**Premenstrual acne** Acne provoked by hormonal changes prior to menstruation.

*“Once you know your acne trigger, you are one step closer to removing the acne activator and living acne free.”*

**Steroid acne** Inflammation of hair follicles caused by internal steroids or from topical corticosteroids on the face.

Steroid induced acne appears as red papules and pustules concentrated in the area where the steroid was applied.

Steroids thin the outer layer of the skin and make the hair follicles more susceptible to rupture.

Lesions usually leave after steroid use ends.

**Tropical acne** Acne experienced by some World War II soldiers in the tropics who developed severe acne with horrible scarring.

# The Kill the Bacteria and Cure the Acne Myth

All life forms strategize to survive and procreate. Weeds, worms, birds, fungi and bacteria all work to sustain their own lives on this planet. In fact, we humans survive because of the biological games constantly unfolding in our midst.

Propionibacterium acnes, or p acne bacteria, are no different. They want and need to survive. Skin bacteria perform an important function. Bacteria use the secretions of our sweat and sebaceous glands (sebum is the oil that makes our skin look shiny) as nutrients. P acnes that are in balance with your body prevent colonization by more harmful bacteria.

P acne bacteria only encourage acne formations if the production of oil on the face is excessive. This surplus of oil is prompted by hormonal, nutritional, environmental and/or psychological changes in the body.

So to prevent acne, you do not want to kill bacteria per se, but keep the amount of bacteria on your skin at an optimal balance. You optimize your oil secretion by understanding and controlling your response to hormonal, nutritional, environmental and/or psychological changes.

If we upset the balance of bacteria in our bodies by taking antibiotics, our resident flora is upset and this enables harmful bacteria (such as Staphylococcus aureus and Acinetobacter baumannii) to colonize our skin. What's more, antibiotics can destroy the balance of intestinal flora and cause constipation.

In short, using antibiotics on bacteria is a battle amongst intelligent parties involving the bacteria, the body, and the human mind.

If we fail to appreciate the bacteria as bodily maintenance workers and continue dousing them with antibiotics, the bacteria just become more resistant to our antibiotics. The bacteria are practiced at playing dead as a tactic for survival.

Even people who have used the strongest acne drug on the market, Accutane, have witnessed the cunning behavior of

*“So to prevent acne, you do not what to kill bacteria per se, but keep the amount of bacteria on your skin at an optimal balance.*

*You optimize your oil secretion by understanding and controlling your response to hormonal, nutritional, environmental and/or psychological changes.”*

bacteria as zits reappear some months after using this course of acne treatment.

These people have discovered that bacteria do not die; they silently and strategically multiply. If you do not want your bacteria out of balance, do not provide them an environment conducive to acne.

# 5 Reasons Little White Bumps Are On Your Face and How to Get Rid Of Them

Are you making these mistakes each time you spot a little white little bump on your face? Fixing those little white bumps starts with a small dose of education and ends with a big dose of prevention. After understanding the five reasons below, your little bumps should give way to clearer skin.

**Reason #1: You have no clue what those little white bumps are anyway.**

Little white bumps, or milia, are keratin-filled cysts, or simply little globs of protein under the skin. There are generally two types of milia. Primary milia may result from oil glands that have not fully or properly developed. Secondary milia result from trauma to the skin.

**Reason #2: You think all little white bumps are acne, and treat them that way.**

Just because you have little white bumps on your face does not necessarily mean that you have acne. Milia, are little balls of protein beneath the skin that do not have a pore, or hole in the skin through which to escape.

Comedones or whiteheads are excess fats and wastes that are trapped in a hair follicle and so they clog up the pore. In short, milia are proteins trapped within the skin, while comedones are fats and skin debris trapped within the pore.

Exfoliating the skin, or removing the dead skin cells from your skin with an abrasive product or chemical, is beneficial. But brutally scrubbing your face with soaps and chemicals too frequently may actually create milia. To avoid this, remember that gentle exfoliation helps prevent excess dead skin cell build-up that could clog your pores and cause whiteheads, not milia.

This gentle exfoliation helps make eventual removal of the milia easier because the skin layer around the milia becomes thinner, with frequent, yet gentle exfoliation. In short, Exfoliate your skin to prevent milia, not to cure them.

*“Comedones or whiteheads are excess fats and wastes that are trapped in a hair follicle and so they clog up the pore. In short, milia are proteins trapped within the skin, while comedones are fats and skin debris trapped within the pore.”*

**Reason # 3** You have no idea what causes those little white bumps anyway.

When you were a baby, you were probably covered with milia that disappear after a few days. Or, you may have inherited milia from your parents.

On the other hand, you may develop milia after excessive exposure to the sun. The reasons for developing milia after sun exposure are debatable. According to some studies, the active ingredients sunscreens like Parsol 1789 may cause sun allergies and later lead to a milia breakout. Other studies blame the sun itself for “damaging” the skin can thus causing little white bumps.

Some people experience milia around the mouth. This could be the result of fluoride irritation from toothpaste.

**Reason # 4: No one ever told you how to prevent milia.**

The best way to prevent milia is to avoid treating your skin with excessively harsh chemicals and to limit sun exposure.

To reduce creating milia around the eyes, use eye creams with the least amount of ingredients possible to avoid irritating the delicately thin eye area. Also, gently touch the eyes and avoid rubbing the eyes vigorously so as not to damage the skin.

When brushing your teeth, try to keep the pasty foam from staying around your mouth too long. This limits possible fluoride irritation to the skin.

Use a sunscreen with the least amount of ingredients. Extraneous ingredients like fragrances may irritate your skin. Additionally, purchase sunscreens that offer physical sun blockage that contain active ingredients like titanium oxide or zinc oxide.

**Reason #5: You still want to know what you can do right now to get rid of milia.**

The key to getting rid of milia is realizing that they have no escape route, those little bumps are trapped under the skin. So, to get them out, you’ll need to have a professional like a

## Soft Comedone Removal

dermatologist or aesthetician extract them. You can extract the milia yourself, but this involves risks.

**Precautions** You need to ensure that your milia are not symptoms of some underlying disease or illness. Also, if you extract the milia yourself, you may have trouble completely pulling out the cysts, as the removable process may prove too painful.

Otherwise, if you are confident with your health and courage, you can cleanse your hands and face. Then wet a cloth with warm water and apply it to your face for a few minutes. Gently apply a sterile needle to the center of the little white bump to create a tiny opening in the skin.

Wrap your thumbs in a clean tissue and, using your thumbs, proceed to gently squeeze the contents of the little white bump out. Finally, cleanse the area of the extracted little white bump with an astringent.

Now, you have no reason to walk around with little white bumps on your face. If you still think you do, please consider the possibility that you're just telling yourself little white bumpy lies.

# Remedying the Silly Ways Women Get Acne When Applying Makeup and Moisturizers

Women spend thousands of dollars to create a flawless face. Yet faulty or uninformed uses of moisturizers and makeup can lead to inexplicable breakouts for women.

The two key symbols to remember when applying makeup and moisturizers are cotton and the feather. Cotton symbolizes the need to use clean applicators when applying makeup. The feather represents light application of makeup and moisturizers.

Here are the four biggest mistakes women make in their beauty regime that can lead to acne and ways to remedy them.

## 1. Re-using a concealer applicator

You have a zit and you want to hide it. So what do you do? Dip your concealer applicator in the bottle and apply the liquid cover directly to the inflamed zit, right. No.

Reapplying concealer to your face with the applicator provided by the manufacturer does one thing only, spread more bacteria. Once you apply the concealer to your face with the applicator wand, you simply return it to the bottle where the bacteria have a whole container in which to flourish. Giving bacteria a breeding ground is what causes acne in the first place, so don't give them new real estate in which to reproduce.

### **Solution:**

To avoid this, apply your concealer with a cotton swab and never, ever use the applicator stick provided by the concealer manufacturer. This will ensure that your concealer applications are always fresh and free of as much bacteria as possible.

## 2. Re-using a foundation sponge

The reasons for not re-using a foundation sponge are the same as the reason for not re-using a concealer applicator, you want to limit the spread of bacteria.

### **Solution:**

Never use the foundation sponge provided by the

*“To avoid this, apply your concealer with a cotton swab and never, ever use the applicator stick provided by the concealer manufacturer. This will ensure that your concealer applications are always fresh and free of as much bacteria as possible.”*

manufacturer of the cosmetic. Instead, use a cotton ball to apply your foundation. This way, each of your foundation applications will be clean.

### **3. Applying moisturizers and makeup with a heavy hand.**

Do you have the habit of piling layers of makeup onto your face? Caking on your makeup clogs your pores. Clogged pores are an ideal breeding ground for acne-causing bacteria.

#### **Solution:**

Always lightly apply your makeup and moisturizer. One easy trick for assuring that you are applying your makeup and moisturizer lightly is that you feel a tickling sensation as you apply your cosmetics. The added benefit of light facial handling is that you reduce stretching and irritating your skin, a combination that can help limit the onset of wrinkles and acne breakouts.

### **4. Not evenly applying cosmetics**

If you notice a collection of pimples surrounding your temple or hairline, this could be because you start applying the makeup or moisturizer at the bottom of your face and work your way upward. However, if the makeup or moisturizer collects on your temples or at the hairline, the cosmetic excess may clog the pores and cause zits.

#### **Solution:**

When applying makeup or a moisturizer, spread it evenly across the entire face. Keep in mind that hair styling agents may have spread to your hairline and this increases the chances of the pores getting congested and zits arising. Also, while cleansing your face, apply a warm cloth onto your hairline area to help remove the waxy build-up that comes from hair styling agents, moisturizers and makeup.

So next time you are applying makeup or your moisturizer, call to mind the feather and cotton, your metaphor for staying “light” and “clean” with your skin.

# Safely Mimicking the Effects of Accutane Without the Side-effects or Costs

Since 1982 Accutane has been a reliable, if not controversial, drug for treating severe acne. Now with FDA representative David J. Graham's statement that Accutane should be taken off the market, and pharmaceutical manufacturer La Roche's defense of Accutane's safety in a Florida courtroom, access to Accutane faces mounting restrictions.

Author of Acne Messages: Crack the code of your zits and say goodbye to acne, Naweko San-Joyz, understands the concerns facing acne sufferer's who desire Accutane-like results. San-Joyz conducted research to inexpensively mimic the effects of Accutane. "Accutane provokes five acne-fighting actions that anyone can replicate using nutrition and self-care", explains San-Joyz.

## **Reduce excess oil secretion:**

Accutane is a derivative of vitamin A and reduces the secretion of oil by the oil glands. Foods that supply the body with Vitamin A and beta-carotene (which is converted to vitamin A by the body) include: Liver, oily fish, whole eggs, carrots, sweet potatoes, and broccoli.

## **Encourage extreme shedding of the skin:**

Using a peel is the easiest method to promote shedding of the skin. Exfoliation releases the build-up of dead skin cells, oils and bacteria trapped in the pores, which could lead to the formation of blemishes.

## **Extreme peels**

Peels come in varying degrees, from mild to harsh. The trichloroacetic acid (TCA) peel is an extreme peel that can cost from \$100 to \$1000 depending on the degree of the treatment. It is only performed in a doctor's office. The TCA is not a save all however. The peel can make the skin sensitive to the sun cause hyper-pigmentation.

*“ Accutane provokes five acne-fighting actions that anyone can replicate using nutrition and self-care”, explains San-Joyz.*

### **Home-use peels:**

Several over-the-counter peels contain papaya enzymes or glycolic acid. These peels lightly exfoliate the skin and are safe for weekly use.

### **Reduce the spread of bacterial infection:**

Using an astringent such as witch hazel or apple cider vinegar to disinfect the skin significantly reduces the presence of bacteria on the face. This reduction limits skin inflammation and the likelihood of a pimple developing.

### **Enhance Fat Metabolism:**

Free fatty acids can irritate the skin and provoke acne eruptions. Reducing intake of foods containing hydrolyzed fats will improve fat metabolism. However, do consume essential fatty acids such as Omega-3 and Omega-6, which are found in foods such as salmon and olive oil.

These essential fats aid the gastrointestinal tract eliminate pro-inflammatory substances, which reduces the possibility of experiencing acne lesions.

### **Reduce inflammation:**

A strong immune system serves as a buffer against inflammation. Stress reducing activities such as exercising, eating a well-balanced diet and sleeping well boosts the immune system. A diet supplemented with B-Complex, zinc and vitamins C and E likewise enhances the effectiveness of the immune system.

Like Accutane, these five steps will not work overnight. Accutane works via creating a bodily environment that is not conducive to acne. By adhering to the nutritional and aesthetic steps above, anyone can attain clear skin while simultaneously augmenting their health.

# Acne & Wrinkles at My Age?

Puberty brought bouts of acne. In your 20s, finding Mr. or Mrs. Right was of chief consequence. When the 30s hit, you worked to raise little Johnnie or Suzie to be a model kid. Now that you are hitting the fabulous 40s, you should be coasting through life, right.

Well, why are you suddenly dealing with the cosmetic double whammy of acne and wrinkles? Even your insurance company figures that you should have gotten rid of acne by the age of 25.

The number people over 30 needing acne treatments has climbed to the extent that a report published in Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology recommends raising the age for insurance coverage of the acne drug tretinoin to at least 40.

The authors of the report, Drs. Steven Feldman and Alan Fleischer, add that many insurance companies refuse to pay for tretinoin prescriptions for patients older than 25.

**Cosmetic Catch 22** Even if your insurance company leaves you to fend for yourself, you still have options for freeing yourself from acne and wrinkles. At first, coping with acne and wrinkles may seem like a cosmetic catch 22. Do you dry your skin with acne cleansers containing benzoyl peroxide and salicylic acid, and worsen your wrinkles? Or, do you smear on the moisturizer to smooth the wrinkles, but cope with the zits brought on by the extra oil or sensitivity to a new product?

*There's a smarter way to handle acne and wrinkles.*

1. Interpret the acne
2. Allow your skin to improve as you use self-awareness to remove zits.

## Interpret the acne

While dealing with acne and wrinkles, target the acne first because acne is an autoimmune disease. Having an autoimmune disease means that your thoughts, emotions, and/or environment are affecting you in an adverse way and require immediate attention.

Thus, acne may reveal that you need to relax more, change your eating habits, reframe your

*“There’s a smarter way to handle acne and wrinkles.*

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interpersonal dialogue, stop dating that jerk from the office and/or make another beneficial alteration to your lifestyle.

Zits arrive on your face to report on some unpleasant activities within your body and life. Once you get feedback from these zits, you can take action to send the zits away while augmenting your health in the process.

Acne is usually an indication various hidden or overlooked health problems. Here’s a sample of the questions you should ask yourself when dealing with acne so that you can unravel the mystery behind your zits.

**Are you:**

**Regular?**

About 70% of your immune system is located in your intestines. If this area is blocked with waste, your immuno-defenses are down. So, instead of waste leaving your body via the rectum, it chooses to leave through the skin. Waste leaving the skin can cause an infection that presents itself as acne.

**Tense?**

Tension likewise reduces the vigor of the immune system. Take a few deep breaths throughout the day to calm your body. Take a long walk in the fresh air to wind down.

**Eating nutritionally?**

Cases of acne have been improved with consuming foods containing zinc, essential fatty acids, vitamin A and a host of other nutrients. All of these vital nutrients are available in leafy green vegetables, fruits and olive oil.

**Worried about unresolved issues?**

Not resolving personal issues creates conflict and tension in the body. Again, these issues must be addressed to avoid undue stress within the body.

**Exercising daily?**

Exercise reduces stress and gives you an opportunity to subconsciously contemplate challenges that you may be

facing. Physical activity also keeps your muscles and intestines toned, which keeps encourages regularity.

### **Changing pillowcase frequently?**

Using a dirty pillowcase aggravates an acne condition. Your face naturally secretes oils during the night. These oils are sticky. So if you pillowcase if dirty, you are allowing your face to collect extra waste during the night, which could further clog your pores.

### **Moving or changing your job/career?**

New demands or feelings of lose can sometimes accompany change. Transfer these emotions into something constructive by writing in a journal or envisioning how these changes are going to benefit you. Find comfort in these changes and opportunities for new beginnings.

### **Experiencing excessive facial hair growth and erratic periods?**

Conditions such as acne, excessive facial hair, and erratic periods could indicate an androgen disorder or other underlying hormonal imbalances. Your doctor can provide you with a series of endocrine tests to ascertain your hormone levels and what corrective actions you should take.

Ricardo Azziz, M.D, who serves as Chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Director of the Center for Androgen-Related Disorders at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, estimates that 80 percent of women with excessive androgen levels suffer from an endocrine disorder called polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

Dr. Azziz adds that women with PCOS often have insulin resistance and are at increased risk for developing Type II diabetes, hypertension and heart disease.

Once the acne is under control you can move on to the wrinkles. Another reason for treating the zits first is because if you alter your lifestyle in such as way as to free yourself from acne, and you doing this in a healthy and patient fashion, you will actually lessen the number of wrinkles you have.

Health is wholeness and beauty is a reflection of robust health. You'll never buy robust health in a jar. It is a mind, body, spirit and environmental support system that garners

*“Health is wholeness and beauty is a reflection of robust health. You’ll never buy robust health in a jar. It is a mind, body, spirit and environmental support system that garners full-bodied health.”*

full-bodied health. Lets look at what you actually need from a “beauty cream”.

Face Cream Education There are five basic ingredients in any given anti-aging or anti-wrinkling cream.

1. The oil or moisturizer
2. The preservatives to keep the cream from spoiling.
3. A scent or flavor
4. A color
5. The active ingredient.

Only one of these components is essential, the oil. The preservative is only needed to keep the cream useful. Your face does not need preservation because the skin is alive. Since some people have allergies to scents and colors in cosmetics, the body says that these two ingredients are not necessary. The active ingredient is usually the latest cosmetic drug or multivitamin that is supposed to lift or dramatically reverse your age by 5-20 years.

Researchers S. Jay Olshansky, Leonard Hayflick and Bruce A. Carnes bluntly comment on the antics of cosmetic companies in their report No Truth to the Fountain of Youth, published in the June 2002 edition of Scientific American. The authors warn everyone aiming to reverse the signs of times on their face that, “... anyone purporting to offer an anti-aging product today is either mistaken or lying”.

I bet you are thinking, “Won’t that oil make acne worse?” The answer is not if you are using the right oil. Some essential oils such as bergamont, lavender, lemon, neroli, sandalwood, tea tree and ylang ylang have cleansing and antibacterial properties which help combat acne infections. Other essential oil like geranium, clary sage and orange regulate the production of oil on the face. When mixed with a carrier oil such as jojoba or camellia, these essential oils are ideal moisturizers.

Nothing that you put on your face will truly change your appearance. Creams are useful, but they are only one

instrument in an orchestra of anti-aging concerts. Health starts on the inside. If you want to improve your beauty start with how you treat yourself and feed yourself. I mean not only what foods you eat but what thoughts you eat.

You may eat thoughts of the sort, “I can’t...”, “I had a stressful day”, “I’m tired of...”, “I can’t wait until...”, “I’m getting old”, “My body isn’t as healthy as it used to be”. The menu is endless. If you want to look young and healthy, you have to think young and healthy thoughts.

Here’s steps to jumpstart your quest:

**Start by changing your thinking.** Develop your own youth model, i.e. with steps you’ll take to maintain your vitality and stick to it.

Enjoy nutritious foods. A study in the Journal of American College of Nutrition found that eating a variety of fruits and vegetables and using olive oil every day could help keep wrinkles away.

The researchers found that people who ate a diet rich in green leafy vegetables, beans, olive oil, nuts and multigrain breads, while avoiding butter, red meat and sugary goodies, were less predisposed to wrinkling. Researchers believe that antioxidant vitamins, such as A, C and E, which are found in fruits and vegetables, may help protect the skin from environmental damage.

**Use a gentle cleanser each day.**

Steam your face everyday for 5-15 minutes, especially if your have acne. The steam removes waxy build-up on the skin while it stimulates circulation. This combo of benefits cleans to pores to reduce the possibility of acne while firming up the skin and facial muscles.

Exfoliate your skin daily.

**Moisturize your face in the morning and evening with natural oils.**

In addition to the acne fighting oils listed above, you can mix essential oils such as frankinsense, myrrh, neroli and rose to help encourage the growth of new skin cells.

You can create a moisturizer by diluting 1-3 of your favorite essential oils in a carrier oil such as jojoba or camellia oil in a ration of 1 part essential oil to 3 parts carrier oil.

**Massage your face daily when you apply your facial oil.**

*“Health starts on the inside. If you want to improve your beauty start with how you treat yourself and feed yourself. I mean not only what foods you eat but what thoughts you eat.”*

Lie down on an incline bench for 5-20 minutes each day to let the blood flow to your head.

**Wear a sunhat in the sun.**

**Give yourself a light skin peel once a month.**

Finally, forty can still be fabulous and your beauty-plan a lot less enigmatic. Just remember the basics, interpret the messages of your zits, and educate yourself about wrinkle creams- you don't need them.

# Busting Acne Myths Requires Individualized Treatment and More Research

If you have acne, you know the deal- everybody has a cream or suggestion to help you get clear skin. But how do you separate myth, medicine and folklore to find an acne treatment that works for you? That's what researcher Parker Magin set out to do in a study entitled, A systematic review of the evidence for 'myths and misconceptions' in acne management.

Magin and co-researchers from the University of Newcastle, New South Wales, conclude that clinicians cannot be "didactic" when making acne treatment recommendations that are based on diet, hygiene and sunlight exposure. According to Magin, acne treatments should be individualized.

Meanwhile, the Academy of Dermatology has published a press release touting, *The Stubborn Truth About Acne: Myths and Misconceptions*. Though this article discusses a recent Stanford University survey that examined acne myths held among young adults, it offers no solid advice for securing an acne antidote. Moreover, its meaning is paradoxical.

For example, the article headlines Alexa Boer Kimball, M.D. who is an assistant professor of dermatology at Harvard University. Dr. Kimball's sums up the survey on acne by saying "that substantial differences still exist between popular belief and scientific support, yet this does not change the way patients attempt to care for their acne."

Dr. Kimball's comments at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology casts a discrediting shadow over her groundbreaking research that aimed to separate acne fact from fiction. Just two years ago in 2003, Dr. Kimball was apart of a Stanford University study investigating the effect of stress on acne.

Then, Dr. Kimball concluded that, "increased acne severity was significantly associated with increased stress levels... while self-assessed change in diet quality was the only other significant association." The results of this study suggested that the link between acne, and diet and stress are no longer hypothetical but warrant further examination.

*“Magin and co-researchers from the University of Newcastle, New South Wales, conclude that clinicians cannot be “didactic” when making acne treatment recommendations that are based on diet, hygiene and sunlight exposure.”*

Another investigation aiming to demystify acne came for Dr. Loren Cordain.

Cordain and his associates explored the link between diet and acne in a study called *Acne Vulgaris: A Disease of Western Civilization*. Cordain noted that Kitavan Islanders of Papua New Guinea and the Aché hunter-gatherers of Paraguay had no active cases of acne.

This prompted the question, “So why does acne vulgaris affect 79% to 95% of the adolescent population in westernized societies?”

Cordain found that genes alone do not cause the disparity of acne incidences between non-westernized and modernized societies. Other factors must enter the equation.

Acne can arise from hormonal shifts, stress upheavals and a host of other causes. Your best defense against acne is observing yourself and noting what conditions, foods and emotions aggravate your acne situation. From there, you can use self-care to reduce acne flare-ups.

# Taking the Pimples Out of PMS

“Nooooo!” shrieks Shelly. Gazing into the morning mirror, she sizes up the latest addition to her face, an anticipated, though uninvited pimple loitering on her chin. “It’s like freaking clockwork.”

Ironically, these pimples do arrive like clockwork according to dermatologist Alan R. Shalita, MD.

During PMS, some women- like Shelly- release more androgens (male hormones) from their adrenal glands. This hormone release alters the skin pH and increases facial oil secretion, a combination that encourages an onslaught of acne eruptions.

Dr. Shalita’s research of how the menstrual cycle affects acne confirmed that premenstrual acne flare-ups are a reality for millions of women. However, Dr. Shalita offers a means for forecasting PMS pimples by pointing out that a previous investigation has demonstrated a link between the skin’s pore size and the menstrual cycle.

For example, the study showed that the skin’s pores are smallest in days 15 to 20 of a 28-day menstrual cycle. Facial oil secretion increased in days 21 to 26 of the cycle and decreased again two days before menstruation. The worst premenstrual acne flares occurred on day 22 of the average 28-day cycle.

It appears that Mother Nature, a procreative mastermind, designed the skin of women to look most radiant and alluring when fair-game maidens most likely have an egg in utero- awaiting a sperm bath.

If you are fantasizing that Mrs. Nature will ease up and that you will grow out of acne, dermatologist Alan R. Shalita, MD omens, “Acne that worsens during a women’s monthly cycle isn’t something that women will grow out of as they get older”.

“That’s some consolation doc,” snorts Shelly. Nevertheless, lay your worries aside ladies. You can derail PMS pimples with preparation.

Counteract the excess oil secretion during your PMS days by using clay masks to extract excess oils. Additionally, ensure

*“During PMS, some women- like Shelly- release more androgens (male hormones) from their adrenal glands. This hormone release alters the skin pH and increases facial oil secretion, a combination that encourages an onslaught of acne eruptions.”*

that you are eating foods containing Omega 3 such as olive oil, salmon, spinach, mustard greens and rainbow trout.

The essential fatty acid found in these foods helps the body eliminate pro-inflammatory substances that can trigger acne. Also, during PMS, give yourself permission to relax.

Rest removes stress from your adrenal glands and helps reduce the amount of androgens circulating in your system.

# Are You Addicted To Your Acne Trigger?

An acne trigger is any thought, location, feeling, food, emotion, response, drink, drug, memory and/or experience that sets off a series of hormonal reactions in your body that ultimately result in an acne formation.

If a food or drink is the culprit behind your acne breakouts you may actually be addicted to your preferred culinary delight. The allergy addition could stem from the body's response to frequently consumed allergens.

During an allergic response, the body releases endorphins. These endorphins in turn create the feeling of a natural high. Any substance that promotes this fleeting state of euphoria may be addictive. So, you may be eating a food that you are allergic to just to get high, and as an after blow, you get acne. Ouch.

Surprisingly, eating a lot of any particular food, even a "healthy food", can incite an allergic response. Though still unexplainable, the food creates an immune response and/or stresses specific digestive enzymes. Poor digestion can irritate the body in multiple ways, generating an allergic response.

One way to decide whether or not you are allergic to a certain food is to examine the foods you most often crave. Are you eating the food to experience a gastronomic high? Foods containing chocolate, dairy, wheat, corn, tomatoes, and soy are common sources of food allergens.

## Sources and additional reading:

*The Inflammation Syndrome: The complete nutritional program to prevent and reverse heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, allergies, asthma.* Jack Challem. John Wiley & Sons. 2003.

*Stop Inflammation Now! A step-by-step plan to prevent, treat, and reverse inflammation- the leading cause of heart disease and related conditions.* Richard M. Flemming, M.D. with Tom Monte. G.P. Putman's Sons. 2004.

## Is Spironolactone The Only Option for Women Over 35 With Acne?

Spironolactone is generally prescribed as an “off label” acne treatment for women. This drug, though intended to help people with heart problems not zit problems, reduces the production of the hormone androgen. Androgen promotes excess facial oil secretion.

Less oil secretion limits the possibility of having clogged pores and acne flare-ups.

Spironolactone works as an androgen receptor blocker. This drug decreases androgen production in the ovaries and adrenal glands. Side effects from spironolactone can include breast tenderness and menstrual irregularity.

For this reason, doctors usually add oral contraceptives like Ortho Tri-Cyclen and Estrostephava to compliment acne treatments and ease potential spironolactone side effects. Ironically though, spironolactone is recommended for women who are not candidates for oral contraceptives.

So should a woman over 35 with acne go with spironolactone? According to the American College of Physicians, the answer is “No”.

In the 2004 May/June edition of the American College of Physicians (ACP) published a medical review of studies that tested the effectiveness of spironolactone for controlling hirsutism, acne, or both in fertile or postmenopausal women. The ACP review found insufficient evidence to recommend spironolactone as an acne treatment.

Nevertheless, Dr. Diane Thiboutot of Pennsylvania State University, Hershey uses spironolactone for female patients with acne accompanied by a suspected endocrine disorder.

For example, when a woman experiences a sudden onset of severe acne or acne that is linked with excessive facial hair growth, irregular menstrual periods, increased libido, dark patches of skin, deepening of the voice, insulin resistance and hair loss, spironolactone may be helpful.

“Spironolactone works as an androgen receptor blocker. This drug decreases androgen production in the ovaries and adrenal glands. Side effects from spironolactone can include breast tenderness and menstrual irregularity.”

Dr. Thiboutot noted that spironolactone “seems to control quite well those cystic-type nodules that they [women] get on their lower face and chin.”

Yet Dr. Julie C Harper Dr. Harper of the department of dermatology at the University of Alabama, Birmingham doesn’t recommend spironolactone so easily. Only if neither topical retinoids nor antibiotics have not worked for a woman’s case of acne would Dr. Harper then suggest using spironolactone for women over 35.

Author of “Acne Messages”, Naweko San-Joyz, says “A woman’s response to androgens is so varied that limiting herself to an androgen blockers like spironolactone certainly does not guarantee a cure, or even a quick treatment.”

San-Joyz adds that overproduction of androgens is just one step in a series of potential events that could lead to acne. Instead of hormonal manipulation with drugs, San-Joyz suggests women with acne regulate this conditional using food, stress control and greater awareness of potential acne triggers like environmental estrogens.

Women with acne have numerous treatments options. If a woman does decide to go with spironolactone, it’s best to get her prescription filled with her gynecologist rather than her general practitioner.

It’s most likely that the gynecologist will be more aware of how a patient may respond to hormonal treatments like spironolactone and oral contraceptives, thus making recovery faster.

# Environmental Causes of Adult Onset Hormonal Acne

Don't listen when they tell you, "You'll grow out of it."

According to the American Academy of Dermatology your typical acne sufferer is now 26 years old. Why is that? You could blame it on hormones. But there is another covert explanation.

Acne is not a simple, skin condition. Multiple factors can contribute to one case of acne. Yet one issue has long been overlooked in the mounting cases adults with hormonal acne, and that factor is the environment.

Take for example an entire city in Italy that one-day found itself crowded with citizens battling acne.

It was a calm Saturday in the summer of 1976 that turned into a toxic inferno for the people of Seveso, Italy. The cause- a failing chemical blew a cloud of white poison called trichlorophenol into the air. Heat from the reaction transformed the trichlorophenol into a one of the most deadly chemicals know at that time: TCDD or dioxin.

Dioxin is an oily powder that sticks to the skin. This poison is spread by the wind and rain. Only the sun can break this poison down over a span of several years.

Months after the explosion locals suffered from damaged internal tissue and farm animals would drop dead in fields. People also developed bumps, blisters and chloracne- a form of acne caused by chemical poisoning.

Moreover, locals developed blackheads and other acne lesions because the dioxin forced the body to produce excessive amounts of keratin, the protein found in hair, fingernails and skin. This build-up of keratin clogged the pores and caused pimples and blackheads.

Ironically, we, as consumers could be making dioxins every day in our own home. Almost every home has a product that contains triclosan. This anti-bacterial agent is used to make cosmetics, anti-microbial

*“Dioxin is an oily powder that sticks to the skin. This poison is spread by the wind and rain. Only the sun can break this poison down over a span of several years.”*

creams, lotions, hand soaps, dish soaps and even acne treatments.

Nevertheless, researchers from the University of Minnesota demonstrated that triclosan could be producing dioxins in the presence of sunlight.

Dioxins do not degrade over time and they can accumulate in body tissues and can eventually lead to health problems. Even low levels of dioxin are a problem because of their tendency to accumulate along the food chain.

For instance, since dioxin accumulates in the fats tissues, and so dioxin may be found in fish, eggs, milk, chicken and beef.

Thus, the link between acne and milk may not be only a hormonal issue, but a result of environmental pollution.

Dioxin is not only linked to acne, but to other rising health conditions like asthma and attention deficit disorder.

Making a substantial reduction in environmental dioxin levels is a nationwide effort. However you can limit your exposure to dioxins right now by avoiding the use of pesticides, drinking filtered water and by eating less meat products.

# Why One Acne Treatment Does Not Cure All

Ever wonder why some people are plagued by acne and others never get a zit?

In some ways, acne is just like the common cold. For instance, if you place five people in an elevator, and one person sneezes, chances are that two out of the four bystanders will “catch” a cold.

Why then, are some people more predisposed to getting colds and others seemingly immune? In this case, why do some people never get acne no matter how gruesome their diet or hapless their skin care regime?

If you have acne, you know the deal- everybody has a cream or suggestion to help you get clear skin. But how do you separate myth, medicine and folklore to find an acne treatment that works for you?

That's what researcher Parker Magin set out to do in a study entitled, A systematic review of the evidence for 'myths and misconceptions' in acne management.

Magin and co-researchers from the University of Newcastle, New South Wales, conclude that clinicians cannot be “didactic” when making acne treatment recommendations that are based on diet, hygiene and sunlight exposure. According to Magin, acne treatments should be individualized.

In brief, treating acne seems cumbersome because the initial causes of acne innumerable. For instance, dietary deficiencies, stress responses, hormonal imbalances have all been linked to acne. Yet, the difficulty in delivering a surefire acne cure from all of these studies lies in defining exactly what is “normal”.

For instance, excess androgen levels are considered a precursor for developing acne, yet one woman, with no incidence of acne, may register “excessive” levels of androgen while another woman battling cystic acne has “normal” levels of the hormone androgen.

Then again, mega-dosing with zinc may help some teenage males alleviate severe acne while other males find no relieve with such nutritional therapies.

*“For instance, dietary deficiencies, stress responses, hormonal imbalances have all been linked to acne. Yet, the difficulty in delivering a surefire acne cure from all of these studies lies in defining exactly what is “normal”.”*

Just remember, you have to define “normal” for yourself. Your best defense against acne is observing yourself and noting what conditions, foods and emotions aggravate your acne situation. From there, you can use self-care to reduce acne flare-ups.

# Closing Remarks

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