

ACNE SKIN CARE

This should be simple and inexpensive. These recommendations are just as effective as all the products advertised on social media and will usually be much cheaper.

Cleansing

- Gentle cleansers - non soap, fragrance free, pH neutral
- Twice daily to remove oil and sweat.
- Avoid scrubbing and abrasive cleansers (foaming, exfoliating) and masks.
- Avoid products containing alcohol, especially toner
- Avoid 'moisturising' cleansers as they often contain oils which block pores.

Some cleansers suitable for acne contain salicylic acid. This works by breaking down the oil to help unblock pores. Salicylic acid also helps dissolve, remove dead skin cells. This can help speed up the clearing of open and closed comedones (blackheads and whiteheads) as well as improve long-term control of acne.

There is in general no additional benefit from other products containing botanicals. Some ingredients have weak evidence for effectiveness, but they certainly aren't magic. Some are irritating and even allergenic.

Moisturizer

A light, oil-free or 'non-comedogenic' moisturiser can be beneficial if you have dry, sensitive, or irritated skin. If you have very oily skin, you're unlikely to benefit from a moisturiser. It is important not to over-use moisturisers because this can make your acne worse.

You may also want to apply to sensitive skin areas not affected by acne such as around the eyes, sides of face, and the skin next to lips and nostrils, along with the neck.

Moisturizer should be applied twice daily, after cleansing – in the morning before sunscreen and makeup, and in the evening before applying acne medication to reduce irritation. Oil free products should be used to avoid blocking pores.

Serums may not add anything to the skin care regime, add to cost, and may cause irritation.

Sun protection

- This is good practice to prevent skin ageing and risk of some skin cancers. Also, some acne treatments (both oral and topical) can cause increased sun sensitivity. Acne scars are particularly sensitive to sun and prone to harmful effects of UV radiation.
- Sun protection is not just sunscreen. This also means avoiding the sun at peak UV times, staying in the shade, and wearing a hat and protective clothing.
- Sunscreen should be labelled SPF 50+, broad spectrum and ideally be tinted. This will protect you from UVB, UVA and visible light. Apply sunscreen in the morning after moisturizer, and reapply after 2 hours if needed, especially prior to and after swimming. Oil free sunscreens may not be water resistant. Zinc and titanium products (physical, non-chemical sunscreen ingredients) are heavy and may worsen acne.

- Only use products labelled oil free or non- comedogenic.

Expectations

Your acne will not respond to treatment and good skin care in a day or two or even a week or two. Over the counter and prescription medication need a minimum of 6-12 weeks before you will see a significant improvement with your acne, but you should see some improvement along the way.

More is not better - applying more skin care or treatment than recommended doesn't mean your acne will clear any faster. Instead, over treatment may cause stinging, irritation and dermatitis which will make your acne look worse and slow down overall improvement.

Other acne skin care tips to consider

Despite the major temptation, ***squeezing, picking, or scratching your acne will only make things worse.*** Treatment will work more slowly, and you risk both pigmentation and scarring.

Remember that acne is not an infection and not related to hygiene.

Other general recommendations

Diet

- This should be 'low GI' (glycaemic index) foods such as vegetables, fibre and complex carbohydrates. Minimise intake of sugar, and high sugar foods.
- There is controversy regarding intake of milk and chocolate.
- In general minimise amount of milk, and drink full cream rather than skim milk.

Exercise

This helps regulate insulin and blood sugar levels and reduces stress, which has beneficial effects on acne.

Sleep

- Tiredness and stress aggravate acne.
- Beware gym and sport supplements as some may contain whey protein, creatinine and hidden anabolic steroids, all of which can aggravate acne.

MAKE UP

Many cosmetic products can worsen or cause acne. Choose products labelled 'non-comedogenic'

Liquid Foundations: These products are typically labelled as oil-based, water-based, oil-free, oil-control or matte-finish. Where possible, choose oil-free and matte-finish products (which also tend to be oil-free). Oil-control products are not necessarily oil-free but they contain blotting ingredients such as talc, kaolin or starch to help absorb excess sebum.

Face Powders: Mineral powders are recommended. They don't settle into the pores of the skin and are therefore non-comedogenic. They give a smooth, matte finish and help control oil. They also give good coverage and reduce the redness associated with acne. Some also have additional soothing agents.

Concealers: If you need to use a concealer, choose a lightweight one. Heavier concealers may aggravate acne by blocking pores. Concealers with a green base help camouflage redness. Some also contain acne fighting ingredients such as salicylic acid so they can help treat your acne at the same time as hiding it.

Blush: Some of the red colour in blush comes from ingredients known as D&C pigments. This can cause pores to block so it's best to avoid it if you have acne. Instead, look for products that use carmine as the colourant. Powders and gels are better than heavier cream blush. Also avoid shimmery products – an effect caused by mica particles in blush and eye shadows. Mica can block the pores and cause skin irritation

Removing make up

Micellar water is a better option for removing make-up. It leaves skin feeling soft and hydrated without causing irritation. Micellar water is great for all skin types too and is particularly suited to people with oily or sensitive skin.

Oil free make up can be removed with cleanser as they are water based.

SHAVING

When acne involves the beard area, careful shaving is the key to avoiding irritation and inflammation that will worsen your acne.

- Moisten skin and hairs with water and liberal coating of moisturiser (light and oil free). This will reduce friction.
- Avoid shaving gels and foams if possible but if used choose products labelled as sensitive.
- Use double or triple blade razors. Two light passes is preferable than one aggressive one.
- Change blades regularly. Sharp blades cause less damage to the skin and harbour less bacteria.
- Moisturise after shaving.
- Don't shave through pimples. If acne is severe stop shaving for a while.