




When acne grows up

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A face-washing routine can help keep acne away from adult faces. Having a proper skin-care regimen is one way to ensure skin stays clear. (Photo provided)

Acne was once thought to be confined to that awkward period of adolescence.

Teenagers cursed it, taking solace in the idea that those huge zits erupting right before their big dates would disappear by adulthood.

Now it seems as if everyone has acne, even well into their 20s and 30s. Celebrities like Jessica Simpson and Jennifer Love Hewitt can be seen promoting Proactiv Solution on infomercials. Google has more than 1 million results for the search “adult acne.”

But to dermatologists, adult acne is nothing new. There simply is more awareness that pimples can be a nuisance beyond the teenage years.

“It’s called just ‘acne’ in the medical community,” said Dr. Amy Derick, a Barrington-based dermatologist. “There’s an old wives’ tale that you’re supposed to grow out of acne. That doesn’t necessarily happen.”

Acne often is hormone-related, but other factors such as hair follicle structure and bacteria also can cause it, Derick said. She cites a study of 749 people 25 and older that showed 54 percent of women suffered from physiologic acne. The condition was present in 40 percent of men.

“Females get it more than males,” she said.

Common treatments for acne include oral antibiotics and anti-hormone medication such as spironolactone, Derick said. For some women, birth control pills also can help reduce pimples.

What’s not recommended is trying to pop the pimples yourself, even if it feels like you’re speeding recovery. People want to feel like they’re doing something, said Dr. Jeanie Downie, the dermatologist-author of “Beautiful Skin of Color.” But touching a blemish could make it worse.

“One of the main reasons people pick is to get rid of it, but the bacteria under the fingernails doesn’t help,” Downie said. “It can even lead to permanent scarring.”

Topical treatments such as retinoids (Vitamin A) applied at night also are used for acne. Because these medications can make the skin more sensitive to sunlight, dermatologists suggest making sure you’re using sunblock during the day. Laser procedures, which also help to reduce sun damage, are among the latest methods being used to treat acne.

Many of the treatments for acne these days also tackle the signs of aging, Derick said.

“It’s becoming popular to try to attack both problems at once,” she said. “A lot of these anti-aging wrinkle creams, the ones that are prescription, can prevent acne from coming.”

A good skin-care regimen also helps keep skin clear, said Elaine Sauer, corporate spa director for Mario Tricoci, which has locations throughout the Chicago area.

“A lot of people fall asleep and don’t cleanse their face before bed,” Sauer said. “You want to get rid of all the makeup, oil and all the day’s dirt.”

And in the spirit of “You are what you eat,” diet also can have an effect on the skin, Sauer said. She recommends foods such as Omega-3 fatty acid rich-salmon, cantaloupe and deep-colored berries. Drinking water helps to flush out toxins, she said.

“If you’re eating a lot of processed or fried foods, it shows up in your skin,” Sauer said. “You have a dull complexion.”

Mario Tricoci carries a line of acne treatments that have anti-aging components but are free of benzoyl peroxide. Although the ingredient is found in many other acne products, it’s not useful for long-term treatment, Sauer said.

When it comes to applying makeup, Derick said, it’s best to stay away from liquid foundation.

“It’s better to use oil-free products on the skin,” she said. “Oil can block the pores and cause acne. You should avoid things that are pancake makeup.”

Acne treatment dos and don’ts

- **DO** have a proper skin-care regimen. Although you don’t want to dry the skin by overwashing, it is important to wash your face before bed each night. This helps to rid the skin of makeup and oil, as well as any dirt accumulated throughout the day.
- **DON’T** try to pop pimples yourself or pick at them. This can make the condition worse and could cause scarring. If the problem persists, seek the help of a dermatologist.
- **DON’T** eat too many processed or fried foods. Instead, try foods rich in Omega-3 fatty acid, such as salmon and fresh fruits such as cantaloupe and berries.
- **DO** use acne treatments that also offer anti-aging elements.

– Compiled by Northwest News Group

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