

Acne & Your Skin

1. I have acne on my face, back and shoulder area. What would you recommend?

I'm sorry to hear you are suffering from acne but the good news is there are plenty of things you can do to help alleviate the breakouts you have now while also preventing new blemishes from forming. Many of my patients are acne-sufferers and, while I advise different topical solutions based on every person's needs, I always assess them based on my philosophy of Inclusive Health. Inclusive Health determines that true beauty radiates from within and comes from the overall health of the body by Looking Better through the use of high-performance, topical products; Living Better by eating a healthy, well-rounded diet with plenty of water-rich foods to hydrate your entire body; and Feeling Better with stress management and Emotional Self-Care.

Topically, I recommend using a cleanser and treatment that contains salicylic acid to kill surface bacteria and exfoliate dead skin cells to prevent new blemishes from forming. Murad's Exfoliating Acne Treatment Gel does just that, with salicylic and glycolic acids, it will penetrate deep into the skin to restore your skin's clarity and control breakouts. It's also imperative that you moisturize daily with a hydrator containing at least a 15 SPF and in the evenings with an oil-free night cream. I recommend using Murad's Clarifying Cleanser and also the Skin Perfecting Lotion at night. If you find that your skin is oilier during the day, you can try the Oil-Control Mattifier SPF 15. Use it in conjunction with Murad's Acne Body Wash and Acne Body Spray to diminish the acne you are noticing on your shoulders and back area; the Acne Body Spray has a 360-degree nozzle that will make it very easy for you to reach the tough spots on your back and the Acne Body Wash will reduce redness and inflammation. Otherwise, exfoliate regularly to prevent dead-skin build-up that often causes pimples.

I also recommend a water-rich diet full of raw fruits and veggies like cucumber, watermelon and pomegranate. You have been told that drinking plenty of water is important, but did you know that you can also *eat* your water and that may be even better for you? Eating your water in the form of raw vegetables and fruits allows a slow release of hydration to the body, without all the trips to the bathroom you get when you flush your body with glass after glass of water. Also, eat foods with omegas, or the good fats, found in cold-water fish, almonds, walnuts and avocados and also plenty of amino acids found in embryonic foods like eggs and beans. You will notice an increased level of cell-turnover and a plump, glowing texture.

Finally, it's vital that you take care of your emotional well-being and manage your stress levels. Take time out of every day to focus on yourself – attend a yoga class, take a spa day for yourself or simply meditate for a few minutes every morning. Take every moment you can for yourself, and like I always say, remember to wear your crown!

2. What do you recommend for adolescents who are just beginning to experience acne?

I recommend Murad's Acne regimen, which includes the Clarifying Cleanser and Clarifying Mask, as well as the Exfoliating Acne Treatment Gel, which contains salicylic and glycolic acids to clear breakouts and prevent new blemishes from forming; Skin Perfecting Lotion to use in the evening and Oil-Control Mattifier Broad Spectrum SPF 15 | PA++ to use during the day to protect from the sun's damaging rays while also reducing shine caused by oily skin. The Acne regimen will help quickly improve skin health and appearance because they simultaneously clear, restore and protect acne-prone skin.

To fully combat acne from the inside out, I must start by explaining that healthy skin is a reflection of overall wellness. When the body is at optimal health, the skin will follow suit. Through my three-faceted philosophy of Inclusive Health, which dictates that you can Look Better by using high-performance, efficacious products; Live Better with the proper fuel your body needs to be healthy in a well-rounded diet high in amino acids, anti-oxidants and water rich foods; and Feel Better through Emotional Self-Care and proper stress management. For an acne-free complexion, I recommend that my patients look at skincare as full body care.

Acne sufferers in the early stages of their teen years are likely experiencing hormonal fluctuations in their body due to age which can wreak havoc on their skin. Combined with oil, sweat and build-up, the skin will often be plagued with papules and pustules that are not only internally-caused, but externally-caused also. Spot-treating these breakouts with a salicylic acid and sulfur-based solution will fight breakouts and heal them to prevent new acne from forming. Clarifying Cleanser is a perfect salicylic-based solution for this.

In addition to topical solutions, it is important to maintain a healthy diet full hydrating raw fruits and veggies. Taking a daily vitamin supplement will also fuel the body to perform at its optimum level of health, and a healthy body only helps to reveal a healthy and glowing complexion. Also, don't neglect Emotional Self-Care – it will keep her mind at ease and help to prevent acne-causing stress, while keeping hormonal fluctuations in balance. The stress of acne can be debilitating to anyone suffering from it, but it is especially difficult for those going through their teen years. The self-esteem of young people is already extremely fragile and the sometimes harsh look of deep, cystic acne (or even mild acne) can directly influence how they externally and internally see themselves. Be sure to remind them as frequently as possible that no matter the level of acne he or she is experiencing, one day it will go away and he or she is beautiful no matter what. Like I always say, true happiness is finding beauty every day. All they have to do is look in the mirror and smile.

3. What's the best way to get rid of a pimple?

To address the pimples you already have, it's important that you do not pick or pop them yourself. If they are really severe, schedule time to see an esthetician who can safely remove the comedone. Apply a spot treatment nightly that contains micronized benzoyl peroxide that won't cause irritation but will still work to eradicate the pimple.

If you absolutely *must* pop a pimple, wash your hands thoroughly first and then use a hot compress to gently squeeze. Lastly, I always tell my patients to never pick at the pimple as it will only spread the bacteria from your fingers and also lead to scarring.

4. Can stress cause acne?

Yes, absolutely. Stress is one of the most common triggers of acne and as I mentioned before, is part of the reason we are seeing more and more adults with breakouts and acne. The pervasive and constant stress of everyday life; the pressure to be everywhere at once, to answer that last email, to return that last phone call – I call this Cultural Stress and it wreaks havoc on delicate skin. Androgens are a hormone that the body produces when it is under stress, it is shown to stimulate the oil glands in our pores that cause the breakouts; this is what is causing stress-related acne.

I see a lot of my patients suffering from Cultural Stress and I have to remind them that they are the most important people in their lives because when they are not at their best, they cannot help those around them.

Take a quick walk around the office to remove yourself from a stressful situation, meditate in the morning, exercise and even treat yourself to a spa day. These are all things that will help you to return to a healthy state of mind to manage your stress effectively. And as I always say, “be imperfect – live longer!”

5. Is there a reason we get a pimple versus a blackhead or cystic acne, or vice versa?

The difference in types of acne breakouts varies person to person and is caused by many differing factors. The biggest contributor to these differences comes down to the complicated matter of genetics.

6. What are the most common reasons adults still get acne?

Most people assume that blemishes only occur within their teenage years. Yet due to stress, hormonal changes, diet and environmental factors, blemishes are becoming more frequent in women in their 20s, 30s and post-menopause. Women in their 50s usually battle hormonal aging brought on by menopause. As estrogen levels drop, menopausal women find themselves faced with the rapidly-aging effects of dry, rough, lackluster skin, increased facial hair growth and breakouts – the most common type of breakout for these “hormonal breakouts” are cysts. Studies have also indicated that stress may lead to acne breakouts for women as well. When under stress, the body produces androgens, a type of hormone that stimulates oil glands and hair follicles, which can lead to acne breakouts.

7. How do you recommend treating adult acne?

Adult acne can be frustrating, especially because managing it is tricky – you must consider the delicate, aging skin before you treat it with harsh acne products. Hormones, stress and environmental aging are all common causes of acne for women in their 20s and 30s. It’s important to manage aging, acne-prone skin effectively in order to reveal a glowing, bright (and acne-free!) complexion.

Women in the later stages of their lives, and even as young as their early 30s, who suffer from acne are likely experiencing hormonal fluctuations in their body due to age; wreaking havoc on their delicate skin. These changes will not show up in blood tests because frankly, there is nothing “wrong” to warrant a negative test result. You may simply have lower levels of estrogen resulting in sudden acne breakouts, dry skin and other pesky side effects. Thus, it is not externally-caused, but internally-caused, making it even more important to treat your body inclusively and nourish yourself accordingly. In addition to caring for your body inclusively, you can also topically treat the breakouts you experience by using a gentle cleanser that will not irritate aging skin. Murad®’s Resurgence® line contains phyto-estrogens, which when applied topically, gives your skin the diminished estrogen it’s lacking and reduces hormonally-caused acne blemishes. Spot-treating these breakouts with a salicylic acid and sulfur-based solution will fight breakouts and heal them to prevent new acne from forming.

In addition to topical solutions, it is important to maintain a healthy diet full hydrating raw fruits and veggies. Taking a daily vitamin supplement will also fuel your body to perform at its optimum levels of health, and a healthy body only helps to reveal a healthy and glowing complexion. Also, don’t neglect your emotional self-care – it will keep the mind at ease and help to prevent age-causing stress, while keeping hormonal fluctuations in balance.

8. Is there a difference in what causes breakouts on the chin, cheeks, forehead, or nose?

There isn’t always a direct correlation between the specific place that a breakout shows up and the cause of the breakout. For example, just because you have a pimple that shows up on your forehead does not necessarily

mean that your diet caused the pimple. With that said, there are some types and causes of acne that seem to be more likely to trigger breakouts in certain areas of the face.

For example, acne found along the jawline, chin, mouth and upper-neck areas are often caused by hormonal fluctuations in the body that trigger large, cystic breakouts, while acne flare-ups down the middle of the face or all over the face are more likely to appear on teenage skin. On the other hand, some people breakout because they have a genetic predisposition that makes them more susceptible to breakouts. Genetic acne tends to appear in the form of whiteheads and blackheads.

When treating acne, I always focus on the cause rather than spot treat. The three primary causes of acne are hormones, age and genetics. As mentioned above, each of these causes can show up on the skin in different ways and each should be treated differently.

It's also important to note that there are acne imitators that may look and feel like acne, but aren't actually acne. These are conditions like rosacea, folliculitis and acne excoriee, just to name a few.

9. How do you treat a cyst-like pimple that is painful and feels like it has roots?

Depending on the severity of the pimple, I recommend spot treating with an anti-inflammatory topical treatment to reduce redness and swelling. Using a clay-based formula to draw out embedded impurities that also features sulfur that will reduce severity and encourage healing.

If it is really severe or if you suffer from cystic acne as a condition, it's possible your doctor can inject cortisone into the blemish as an anti-inflammatory agent. Your doctor may also be able to provide antibiotics to specifically target cystic acne if it is severe enough.

10. During summer time, my skin is prone to breakout, are there any easy tips to prevent this?

It is likely that you are experiencing breakouts during the hot, humid months of summer because of increased production of oil in your skin. As your body sweats, an accumulation of oil, outside debris and other pollutants can rest on the surface of your skin and cause clogged pores and pimples to appear.

To alleviate some of these peripheral breakouts, I recommend a cleanser with a high amount of salicylic acid to be used in the mornings and evenings. Murad®'s Clarifying Cleanser contains 1.5% salicylic acid to combat acne breakouts, but also contains the Murad Recipe of hydrators, anti-inflammatories and anti-oxidants to assure skin is at its healthiest. I also suggest the use of a toner like Murad's Clarifying Toner twice a day, to fully cleanse skin and restore it to its natural pH balance. Follow with an oil-free moisturizer like Murad's Oil-Control Mattifier to keep oil production in check while also protecting from the damaging rays of the sun with 15 SPF. Another great way to prevent oil is to dab your skin with rice paper throughout the day to absorb oil without removing any makeup.

11. What ingredients in skin care should I avoid if I have acne-prone skin?

There aren't any specific ingredients that I would tell you to completely avoid. When I evaluate the skin, I look at the factors that help keep your skin healthy. Healthy skin is a reflection of overall wellness. When the body is at optimal health, the skin will follow suit. Most people think acne breakouts have the same cause and run the same course regardless of your age, sex or life experience. While that would certainly make it a little easier to predict and treat, everyone has a unique experience with acne.

Many people think that the only way to treat acne is through the topical application of acne products and medications. While this certainly helps to treat acne, we can do a lot more to prevent it from happening in the first place. I always say that I do not treat acne patients; I treat patients who happen to have acne. This is because in order to attain a completely radiant and acne-free complexion, it's important to focus on the whole individual and understand the underlying cause of that individual's concerns. I call this Inclusive Health, a three-pronged approach, which includes using topical skin care products, eating a plant-based diet and taking appropriate supplements, as well as taking time to find your Sense of Self - the emotional and spiritual balance in your life. Over the years, I have been able to accurately analyze my patient's skin by simply asking them some basic questions about the products they use, their emotional health, and their diet. Are you eating your water in the form of fruits and vegetables high in anti-oxidants? Do you find yourself stressed out all the time and grumpy? Are you taking the time to care for yourself? These answers, coupled with an analysis of specific areas of their face give insights on why they are struggling with correcting their skin conditions.

In the case of adult acne, my preferred treatments contain the Murad recipe of antioxidants, anti-inflammatories and hydrators. The combination of these three types of ingredients will leave skin fresh, hydrated and healthy, without stripping the skin of its natural oils. Ingredients such as Willow Bark, Sulfur and Silver Citrate can all help reduce and prevent blemishes by reducing the surface bacteria on the skin. Ingredients such as Retinol, Salicylic Acid and Glycolic Acid help fight acne while also reducing the signs of aging. Combined with an Inclusive Health approach to your condition, these anti-aging and anti-acne treatment ingredients will help restore a youthful appearance to the skin, free of blemishes.

12. If your skin is prone to acne, should you stay away from oil-based beauty products? Should you wash your face more often?

Simply put, just because your skin may be acne-prone does not necessarily mean you need to stay away from oil-based products. For example, some cleansing oils may actually help to reduce acne because of its ability to remove oil, makeup and other impurities from the surface of the skin. Additionally, I do not recommend washing your face more than twice daily because it can cause dryness and irritation that may actually exacerbate acne. It's a common myth that those who suffer from acne have "dirty" skin and they often feel the need to wash and scrub their skin to make it "clean"; in actuality, it's not dirty, it just needs specific care. It's important to experiment with what works for you and use the products that you find work well with your skin. Like I always say, "allow the unique you to blossom!"

13. What would you recommend me to get rid of acne scars?

It's common for those who have had even the mildest of acne to soon see scarring and spots after, or even before, their acne clears. In order to effectively manage and reduce the appearance of these marks, it's important to treat your skin as a barometer of your body's overall health and wellness. My philosophy of Inclusive Health dictates that in order for skin to truly be its most beautiful, it must be healthy. True health and beauty is achieved at the cellular level and can be achieved by looking better through topical care, living better through internal care and feeling better through emotional self-care.

In this particular case, especially because you are interested in natural treatments for acne scarring, I recommend a focus on internal care through a proper diet full of antioxidants and water-rich foods like raw fruits and veggies. Build your diet around foods with omegas and good fats like cold-water fish, almonds, walnuts and avocados. Incorporate embryonic foods like beans and eggs that are full of cell wall-building lecithin and other foods with amino acids.

Topically, Vitamin C is a great, natural way to fade pigmentation and rejuvenate skin's clarity to reveal a glowing, healthy complexion. While pure Vitamin C is difficult to come by, as it is highly unstable in its natural form, there

are products that contain high amounts in Vitamin C that also feature low amounts of harsh ingredients and lightening agents. Our White Brilliance line works in conjunction with potent levels of Vitamin C, promoting healthy cell turnover that seeks to lighten and brighten the skin. Additionally, gentle physical exfoliation a few times a week can greatly benefit someone suffering from acne since exfoliation sloughs away dead skin that builds up and can cause clog pores. Exfoliation also helps speed cell turnover and diminish the look of acne scars and uneven skin, resulting in newer, smoother and more even skin.

