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# ACING ACNE

Ever wonder what "Picture Perfect" skin looks like? Find out which potions, lotions and lasers make your skin-care dreams become a reality.

By Fiona Wright M.D.

**B**reakouts are for teenagers, right? Wrong. Acne is the most common skin disorder in the United States, affecting 40-50 million Americans according to the American Academy of Dermatology. Although adolescent acne is considered to be a "common part of growing up," many adults also experience acne well into their 30s and 40s. In fact, it is believed that about 25% of adult men and up to as many as 50% of adult women suffer from adult acne at some point during their adult lives. Although this information may sound like I dropped an Acne Bomb – the exciting news is that there are many skincare advances in the fight against acne that are backed by proven data in dermatologic research. With the advent of combination therapies, improved formulas, and high-tech lasers, my patients are reporting happier endings for their once hopeless stories.

## What Causes Acne?

When bacteria get trapped in pores, because of oil or dead skin, they start to multiply and irritate your skin. Those red bumps (aka pimples) are actually signs that your body is fighting the bacteria. Acne can be caused by a combination of many factors including genetics, hormones, stress, cosmetics, frequent irritation caused by rubbing or picking the skin, pressure from tight-fitting hats or clothing, environmental irritants, colognes or other scented products, and scrubbing the skin too hard or too often.

## What Makes it Worse?

1. Heredity. Most people inherit the tendency to develop dysfunctional oil glands at a time in life when certain normal hormones affect the oil glands. If your parents had acne, there is a good chance that you will too. 2. Hormones. Changing hormone levels cause production of abnormal oil from genetically predisposed dysfunctional oil glands. 3. Stress. The stress hormone, cortisol, also increases pore-clogging oil. This abnormal, thick oil clogs the pores, allowing the backup of oil and increased pressure, which then causes the gland and oil ducts to leak or rupture under the



skin. Once ruptured, inflammation and then infection can occur. When acne is severe, it can lead to serious and permanent scarring.

## Where to Start?

Wash, Protect and Prevent. 1. Wash. Wash your face twice a day with a gentle cleanser that won't dry out your skin. If your skin becomes too dry, your body actually pumps out more oil to compensate. Store Solution; Neutrogena Sensitive Skin Solution, Clinic Favorite; Mild Gel Cleanser by Fiona Wright MD Skincare. 2. Protect. Protect your face with a light oil-free sunblock for basic skin health. If your skin is normal to dry, the lotion will also keep your face from getting parched. Store Solution; L'oreal Sublime Sun Face Lotion SPF 50, Clinic Favorite; Matte Finish Oil-Free SPF 30. 3. Prevent. For regular breakouts, prevent excess build up oil by using a salicylic (beta hydroxy acid chemically related to aspirin) containing products that will dissolve the dirt and dead

skin that can trap the bacteria in your pores. Store Solution; Biore Warming Anti-Blackhead Cream Cleanser, Clinic Favorite; Purifying Toner with Salicylic and Glycolic. For stubborn acne do all the above – and Exfoliate with a glycolic-acid cleanser one to three times a week to deep-clean pores. This will slough off dead skin cells in the same way salicylic does, but it's stronger. Store Solution; DDF Glycolic Exfoliating Wash 7%, Clinic Favorite; Acne all-in-one Cleanser available in 2, 5, and 10% glycolic by Fiona Wright MD Skincare.

## Topical Attack

If over-the-counter (OTC) treatments don't work for you, talk to your doctor about prescriptive medications. Treatments today attack acne from all fronts by using a combination of ingredients to help keep acne at bay. These products have established a firm foothold in acne formulations which include; benzoyl peroxide, sulfur, retinoic acid derivatives and



azelaic acid.

In problematic cases, I prefer to prescribe a retinoic acid (tretinoin) gel which unplugs clogged pores of excess cells and oils, and prevents future breakouts. Tretinoin may be used alone or in combination with topical antibiotics or benzoyl peroxide. These medicines may require weeks or months of use for results and work best when adjusted carefully by your physician. You may also be prescribed these topical medications in combination with OTC products, so that other contributing skin problems (such as ingrown hairs, skin irritations or pigmentation changes) may be treated. A popular non-prescriptive product at my clinic is Radiance, exclusively at Skin MD and Beyond, which combines the best acne fighting ingredients to clear your complexion, prevent new breakouts, and reverse pigmentary changes from acne scarring, as well as sun damage.

For more problematic acne, oral prescriptive medications may be needed. The most popular are birth control pills to even out zit-producing fluctuations in estrogen levels, and antibiotics to decrease inflammation and destroy bacteria. For severe acne, Accutane may be a final option. This daily pill is taken to shrink the glands that produce oil. It's the strongest acne medication available. Although it is extremely effective, it has more serious side effects such as dry peeling skin, sensitivity to sun, redness, dry eyes, gastrointestinal symptoms and birth defects if taken by pregnant women.

### Face Off with Acne

Treatment for acne depends upon its severity. It consists of using medications which chemically unclog pores, reduce infection and inflammation, and normalize abnormal oil gland production. Topical preparations (creams, gels or lotions) may be prescribed to help unclog the pores and reduce the amount of harmful

bacteria. However, it is important to know that acne treatments aren't a one-size-fits-all commodity. If prescription creams and antibiotics aren't working for you — or if you can't tolerate the side effects these medications can cause — you might consider acne treatments that include lasers,

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lights and advanced facial treatments.

Blackheads and acne are common results of clogged pores. Although you can't physically shrink pores, microdermabrasion which exfoliates the skin's surface, will remove the top layers of skin that clog the pores, and can reduce acne breakouts. Think of a device that sandblasts grime and debris off granite buildings, and you get an idea of microdermabrasion, with the emphasis on 'micro'! Small particles passing through a vacuum tube remove the top layer of the skin and are said to stimulate new cell growth. These devices have now become even more sophisticated with the development of the DermaSweep device.

The *DermaSweep™* uses a gentle vacuum to lift the skin against the treatment tip, removing the topmost layer of skin. A variety of treatment tips are available to ensure complete customization, and the deepest penetration and exfoliation for individual skin types. Immediately following treatment the skin feels smooth and refreshed with increased blood flow to the surface. This increased circulation encourages new collagen formation, and firmer, more youthful-looking skin. For people experiencing active acne, the *DermaSweep™ Epi-In-fusion* treatment for acne, penetrates further into the dermis and simultaneously applies topically medication, to

effectively treat the condition at the source.

### Lighting the Way

The next advanced level in treatment is the *Blu- U Light*, which kills bacteria behind the pimple, improving the appearance of mild to moderate inflammatory acne. Beneath the skin's surface, the tiny pathway for the oil to escape can get clogged, and bacteria can grow inside. The *Blu-U* is a very special blue light that can kill this problematic bacteria living in your skin. This FDA approved treatment involves a series of 16 minute sessions about twice a week — which may continue for 5 to 6 weeks. It is very safe, it's not hot or painful at all. This is a very effective and popular procedure in my clinic, which after some weeks, my patients can control their acne, or clear it up for a very long period.

In *Glamour Magazine's* Glamour Face Test, Judy Seidman, age 35, commented, "I had huge cysts on my cheeks and a lot of redness. I always thought people were staring at my face. Then 6 months after *Blu-U* treatments, I occasionally get a few small pimples but nothing like before. Friends ask what I did to get my skin looking so good."

It may not be fair, and it may not be easy, but clear, smooth skin can be achieved when you use the best combination in acne treatments for your skin. With the unique blending of traditional therapies and the new technological advances for acne, patients can now expect significantly greater and faster improvements than with conventional treatments alone. The final result will allow you to look in the mirror and focus on you — rather than the acne, and enjoy the results of healthy, glowing and acne free skin!

To learn more, log on to:  
[www.SkinMDandBeyondBlog.com](http://www.SkinMDandBeyondBlog.com)  
[www.FionaWright.MD.com](http://www.FionaWright.MD.com)

## Dare to Bare it All

Ingrown hairs are also a common acne-causing problem. Caused by a hair that curves as it grows or is cut and then grows either into the skin or through the hair follicle wall, the hair follicle becomes blocked with dead skin cells that have mixed with naturally occurring skin oils. In both cases, the blemish occurs because of skin irritation. Often pimples that arise from ingrown hairs are not serious or cystic — but can still be painful, embarrassing and create permanent scars and pigmentation changes. Ingrown hairs and acne, can affect not only the face, but many areas of the body where hair is removed such as the back, legs and bikini area. Some people are more prone to ingrown hairs than others. Sensitive skin and thick, deep hair growth are the leading causes of ingrown hairs.

For the most permanent solution, **Laser Hair Removal** can help remove your hair and prevent the annoyance of ingrown. In the past, many patients were reluctant to try lasers treatments as it would take hours to do a full laser treatment of the back, bikini, or legs — and require anaesthetic cream up to 30 minutes prior to treatment to reduce the pain experienced. But now, with recent advances, new machines like the **High Speed LightSheer Duet** can get rid of excessive and unwanted body hair with exciting speed, amazing comfort and reliable results. Our patients have been impressed with this new laser hair removal technology as some treatments can be as fast as 5 minutes and most are virtually pain free.