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Blemish Busting

Pesky pimples have a way of popping up at the worst times – follow our simple guide to keep blemishes at bay

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First published in Wish September 2008



What Is It?

“Acne is when you develop blackheads, whiteheads and/or red bumps on your face, back or chest,” says Dr. Victoria Taraska, a dermatologist at the First Glance clinic in Winnipeg. It’s most common in teenagers, but (sadly) adults are not immune.

Triggers

Oil glands may get clogged due to:

- dead skin cells
- bacteria
- hormonal changes (anything from stress, to medication, to pregnancy)
- natural over-production of oil
- poor makeup and sunscreen choices
- excessive rubbing

What About Diet?

“There are some questions about carbohydrates or dairy being triggers, but the science isn’t all that

strong,” says Dr. Taraska. “I usually ask patients to try avoiding those foods for a month to see if it’s contributing to their acne.”

Quick Fix

“Don’t wear thick makeup or cream,” says Dr. Taraska. “If you wear sunscreen, use a gel or spray, because they’re lighter. And always shower after workouts.”

Other Helpful Tips:

Switch to a cleanser that contains salicylic acid (which exfoliates pores to keep them from clogging) or benzoyl peroxide (which exfoliates and kills bacteria). For occasional large, red, deep pimples (the “wedding pimple” as Dr. Taraska calls it), get a local injection of a diluted form of Cortico-steroid, which will dissolve it in as little as two days. It will cost between \$10 and \$50. **Tip:** Your dermatologist may fit you in at the last minute since it’s such a short visit.

Long-Term Commitment

In the old days, doctors told patients to sit outside so the sun could dry the skin and kill acne bacteria. Now, light-based treatments improve acne, without harmful UV effects.

Blu-U: Blue light is a part of the visible light spectrum. It decreases both oil production and bacteria. Frequency: Twice a week for 15 minutes.

Downtime: None!

Cost: 200 minutes is approximately \$180.

Good for: Mild acne.

Photodynamic therapy: For a stronger treatment, a doctor applies a solution called Levulan, and an hour later you have either Blu-U or a laser treatment. Your oil glands absorb the Levulan, which helps curb oil production and kills bacteria.

Frequency: Every six weeks, as needed.

Downtime: Skin can look sunburned (red, peeling), so expect two to five days of downtime, depending on your skin.

Cost: About \$250–\$450 per treatment, based on whether you choose laser or Blu-U.

Good for: Moderate to severe acne.

Oldies, But Goodies

Chemical peels with glycolic, lactic or salicylic acid exfoliate skin to keep oil glands clear. A dermatologist can use a higher concentration of these ingredients, but if your acne isn’t severe, visit an esthetician for a mild peel. **Tip:** A peel can rejuvenate a dull complexion or help even out skintone.

Accutane reduces oil gland production and improves severe acne. “The most common side effect is dry skin, but the other, rare side effects are mood changes and headaches,” says Dr. Taraska. You also need to have regular blood work done and you cannot get pregnant while you’re taking it (though it doesn’t affect your fertility).

The birth control pill adds estrogen to your system. More estrogen equals less testosterone (the oil-causing hormone), and usually less acne.

Oral antibiotics kill bacteria and act as anti-inflammatories. After two to three months, you get weaned off as your acne improves.

More on Acne:

[Are You Causing Your Breakouts?](#)

7 simple, skin-saving tips to help you control breakouts

[6 Acne Myths](#)

The truth about blemish busting