

SWEAT LIFE

5 TIPS TO FIGHT BODY ACNE (EVEN IF YOU SWEAT FOR A LIVING)

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Body acne happens to the best of us, and those that spend most of their time at the gym are particularly prone to pimples on their chests, backs, and yes, even butts.

Acne breakouts are the result of sticky dead skin cells that don't shed, excess oil production, bacteria, and inflammation, says Jennifer Haley, M.D., dermatologist in Arizona and Utah. "When the flow of sweat is blocked, the pores become plugged with the sticky skin cells, oil, and toxins, leading to breakouts," explains Haley. Workout gear that isn't breathable, friction, harsh cleansing or scrubbing, and not removing toxins left behind after sweating can all lead to body breakouts, Haley adds.



So what can you do to fight body acne and prevent it in the first place, even if you sweat for a living? These tips will keep your skin in the clear, from head to toe.

Avoid wearing makeup to the gym.

“Makeup or lotions may block the flow of sweat,” says Haley. “On a makeup-free face, sweat can exit the pores more easily.” If you must have something on your face, the only type of makeup Haley recommends is a loose mineral powder makeup. Jane Iredale and Colorscience are two good brands. Always look for products that are labeled “non-comedogenic,” says Haley, since this means they won’t clog pores.

Hit the shower ASAP.

“The key to preventing and treating body acne is to rinse the sweat off quickly,” says **Kristina Goldenberg of Goldenberg Dermatology** in New York City. “When the sweat stays on the skin for prolonged periods of time, it causes occlusion and leads to acne formation.” Goldenberg is a fan of benzoyl peroxide, which helps curb inflammation and bacteria. Haley likes salicylic acid, which gently exfoliates dead skin cells so they can’t clog pores. Pack a body wash with either of these ingredients to keep body breakouts at bay.

Use wipes in a bind.

Teaching back-to-back fitness classes or heading straight to the office from the gym? If you don’t have time to shower after working out, rely on wipes. “Get yourself benzoyl peroxide foam cloths and wipe down the affected area right away,” suggests Goldenberg. “It’s important to change into dry clothing quickly as sweaty clothing can also cause occlusion and acne.”

Choose your workout gear wisely.

“If you wear any type of gear when you sweat, make sure it fits well to avoid friction,” says Haley. “I commonly will see breakouts on the forehead in people who wear hats, helmets, or headbands or on the chin in football players or on the face where a phone is held for long periods of time.” Friction irritates your follicles and allows for bacteria to build up, Haley says. (And if you’re drying off sweat with a towel, dab, don’t rub, to avoid friction, adds Haley.)

As far as the clothing you wear while you workout, choose lightweight, moisture-wicking items, and avoid anything tight that can cause friction. “The more your skin can breathe, the better,” says Haley. Don’t forget to take a look at any mats you’re borrowing at the gym—they can be loaded with germs. Haley recommends wiping them down before you use them.

Spot treat pimples.

Noticed a giant zit pop up on your back? You don’t need to slather your entire back with an acne-fighting treatment. Simply spot treat with tea tree oil or benzoyl peroxide. “Both kill bacteria but can be irritation, so take it slow and see what works best for you, says Haley.