

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/quarantine-breakouts-acne-facemask-lockdown-skin-zits-pimples-home-remedies-11590429894>

A-HED

When Your Skin Breaks Out in Lockdown

People are winging it with home remedies to treat acne in quarantine: honey, toothpaste, face stickers

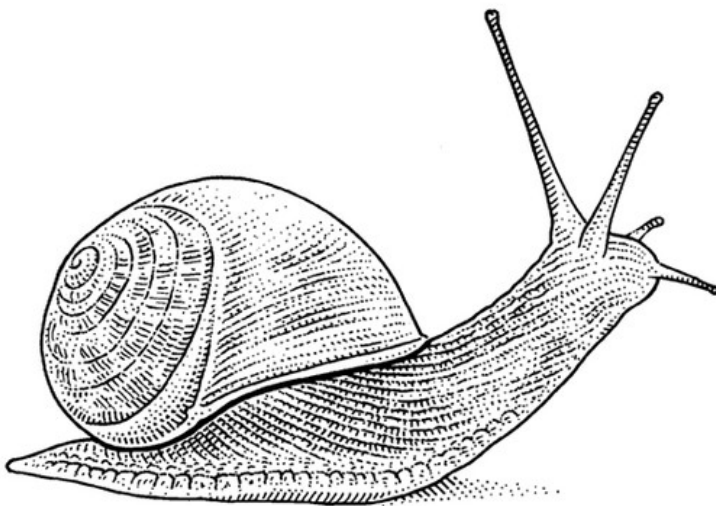
By [Suzanne Kapner](#)

May 25, 2020 2:06 pm ET

Alex Gnibus thought one perk of working from home during the coronavirus pandemic would be glowing skin, because she planned to stop wearing makeup.

Instead, the 24-year-old publicist broke out across her forehead, chin and cheeks. “It felt like my face was angry with me,” said the Denver resident.

She tried soothing her skin with tea bags. No help. She slathered a detoxifying clay mask on her face. She got questions from colleagues about why she wasn’t turning on her video on a recent Zoom call. Her acne didn’t go away.



You secrete me

Normally, she would get an inflammation-reducing cortisone shot from her doctor. But quarantine made an in-person appointment out of the question.

Lots of people are stressed out after two months of lockdown. For some, it’s written all over their faces.

With social-distancing preventing trips to the dermatologist, amateurs are turning to at-home remedies that range from

WSJ JOBS

How do I find a job during this crisis?

WSJ reporters answer your career questions amid the pandemic.

GET THE NEWS





Alex Gnibus tries drying lotion.

PHOTO: CHRIS MORAN

“Can quarantine skin be a thing because I’ve got new zits popping up left and right,” wrote Emily Dawson in a [Twitter](#) thread, #Quarantineskin. Ms. Dawson, a 22-year-old student at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va., said she has started washing her face multiple times a day and wearing detoxifying face masks that she buys online.

“My skin freaked out at the beginning of quarantine,” said Emily Ratajkowski in an Instagram Story last month. The model and actress, with 26.3 million Instagram followers, has tried products with snail mucin, a slimy secretion from the mollusks.

“I’m all for natural, but not all of [the home remedies] work,” said Manhattan dermatologist Gary Goldenberg. He said some of his patients who have taken matters into their own hands have done more harm than good.

Some have slathered their faces with mashed avocado or coconut, both of which are loaded with pore-clogging oil that can worsen breakouts. Others have made concoctions of toothpaste and peroxide in the hopes of drying out their pimples, only to wind up with red, irritated blotches. One patient was planning to exfoliate with ground coffee beans, before Dr. Goldenberg warned that it would tear up her face.

Lindsey Norton, a social worker who lives in New Haven, Conn., searched YouTube for tips on how to calm her blemishes. Normally, her complexion is clear, but she started to get pimples on

WSJ

How do I find a job during this crisis?

WSJ reporters answer your career questions amid the pandemic.

WSJ



her cheeks and chin after she began sheltering at home with her two small children. Nighttime chocolate binges didn't help. "I was eating like I was pregnant again," the 35-year old said.

HOW WE MANAGED DURING CORONAVIRUS »



- [See all of the coronavirus A-heds](#)

She tried taking vitamin A supplements, which have inflammation-reducing antioxidants, coating her zits with manuka honey, pollinated from the manuka bush and known for its antifungal properties, and practicing Tai Chi to reduce stress. Nothing worked. Now, she is considering spending \$300 on a blue LED light, which is supposed to reduce acne-causing bacteria.

The breakouts prompted her 3½-year-old son to ask what was on her face. She told him it was a boo-boo. "At least I don't have to go out in public right now," Ms. Norton said.

Doctors said acne flare ups and other skin ailments such as psoriasis and eczema are surging as the health crisis causes stress levels to skyrocket and upends eating, sleeping and hygiene routines.

During stressful times, excess amounts of the hormone cortisol are released into the bloodstream, and that can stimulate oil production, according to Ronald Moy, a Beverly Hills, Calif., dermatologist.



Emily Dawson wears a gel mask.

PHOTO: EMILY DAWSON

Foods high in sugar and simple carbohydrates can cause inflammation. Increased alcohol consumption, which is dehydrating, a lack of sleep and veering from established routines can also play a role. Wearing a face mask to go outside can trap oil and makeup, causing further irritations, he added.

“If you’re binge watching TV shows late at night, because you don’t have to be at the office early the next morning, that can affect your sleep and your skin,” said Sara Perkins, assistant professor in the Yale School of Medicine’s dermatology department.

Kate Neuman, a 38-year-old dentist in Marlboro, N.J., started snacking on chocolate, pretzels and chips to alleviate the stress of having to close the four offices she operates with her partners and furlough all of their nearly 80 employees. “You start eating things you shouldn’t

WSJ JOBS

How do I find a job during this crisis?

WSJ reporters answer your career questions amid the pandemic.

GET THE NEWS



SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

What home remedies have you tried to help your skin? Join the conversation below.

She stopped washing her face regularly while she was juggling housework, home schooling her children and applying for a small business loan.

Her doctor put her on a strict diet that eliminated grains and dairy. He also prescribed probiotics and retinol. She went back to her normal cleansing routine. She prescribed herself some reading to reduce stress: The Outlander series by Diana Gabaldon— historical fiction and romance novels (with time travel).

All have helped her skin, she said. “I’ve adapted to reality,” she said. “This is the new normal.”

Jules Tursl, a 21-year-old production assistant, covered her face with clove oil, rich in the anti-inflammatory chemical eugenol, but it gave her a rash. She rinsed her face with apple cider vinegar but didn’t dilute it enough and her skin became rough and scaly.

The Millstone, N.J., resident’s biggest challenge has been to stop poking at her face. She put away her magnifying mirror to make it harder and started wearing little stickers on her face— clear plastic dots that treat blemishes and discourage her from touching her face.

“I can fight the urge,” she said, “if I’m not sitting at home looking in the mirror all day.”

Write to Suzanne Kapner at Suzanne.Kapner@wsj.com

Copyright © 2020 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.

