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How to Get Rid of Cystic Acne Without a Prescription



by DACY KNIGHT



The embarrassing breakouts that punctuated our middle and high school years were almost like rites of passage. Our parents gave us gentle words of encouragement, reminding us that it was "just a phase" that one

day we'd "grow out of." But for many, adulthood doesn't make one immune to acne. Bad skin is something that can stick with us, or even come and go unexpectedly and almost always at the most inopportune times. Doctors **Gary and Kristina Goldenberg, MDs**, of Goldenberg Dermatology in New York City, say that the number of adult women with acne that they see in their practice has been growing every year. "In fact, adult women are the fastest growing segment of patients with acne," they note. "Some of these patients never had acne as teenagers, or had very mild acne, and developed acne as adults in their 20s, 30s, 40s, or even as late as [their] 50s."

As the Goldenbergs explained, there are several contributing factors. The dermatologists list hormonal imbalance, genetics, diet, and outside elements like skincare and makeup as potential causes, noting that for most patients it's a combination of these factors—but "hormones are the main cause." Because of that, getting to the root of the problem has a lot to do with rebalancing hormones. So while "treatment usually requires a combination of topical creams, pills (such as antibiotics or Accutane), injections with steroid medicine, or laser and light devices," modifications to one's lifestyle are also important. We've highlighted the Goldenbergs' top picks here. **Head below to see the number one lifestyle component that contributes to cystic acne and how to change it for clearer skin.**

Overhaul Your Diet

The top lifestyle habit the Goldenbergs pinpoint as contributing to cystic acne is diet. "Diet is very important in development and progression of acne," they explain. "Therefore, diet modifications really help." They advise all their patients to either stop consuming dairy altogether or to consume only organic dairy products. With their suggested eating plan, meat and poultry should be antibiotic- and hormone-free. "We recommend a daily probiotic and ask patients to consume more anti-inflammatory foods," they say. "A diet that produces an alkaline state is also important." The Goldenbergs also recommend cutting down on alcohol if you feel like you're overdoing it.



Keep It Clean

Though it will take time to eventually keep skin clear, one of the first steps you should do is keep it clean. The Goldenbergs advise showering immediately after working out. Don't risk a minute of bacteria sitting on your skin after you've broken a sweat. Be sure to shower and wash your face right away to ensure pores stay clean and clear. The Goldenbergs also say to make sure your pillowcase is always clean. Your head rests on it every night, so whatever is in the fibers will be picked up by your skin. Regular washes and avoidance of sleeping with wet hair can help reduce irritation and infection.



Slip Silk Pillowcase (\$79)

Refresh Skin With a Peel

"Peels helps acne, and to some extent, cystic acne," say the Goldenbergs. "Peels containing retinoids or glycolic acid can be used alone or in combination with other treatments, such as prescription creams and pills." When you're battling cystic acne, you want to be extra picky about your skincare, collaborating with a dermatologist to choose the right formulas to serve your skin. As the Goldenbergs warn, "your skincare routine can also potentiate acne or make it worse."



Ole Henriksen Instant Transformation Lemon Facial Peel (\$48)

Reduce Your Stress



Thrive Market Lavender Essential Oil (\$18)

Whatever lifestyle changes you decide to commit to, the Goldenbergs warn against waiting for your acne to become so severe before getting an evaluation with a dermatologist. "Often, we can prevent cystic acne from developing by treating it early," they say. And if you're already battling it, the Goldenbergs want you to remember there's hope. "There are many effective treatments available with your dermatologist. If you've developed scarring from acne already, many procedures exist to help decrease the appearance of those scars."