Teen acne alert

Health tips to enhance healing

Lorna Vanderhaeghe, BSc

Pimples and blackheads may be the worst part of becoming a teenager. Maintaining good hygiene and choosing healthy foods and nutritional supplements can help build and maintain healthy skin.
Healthy inside and out
A nutritious diet and good digestion is the foundation for a clear complexion. Choose natural whole foods that include fresh fruits and vegetables, grains, essential fatty acids, and vegetable protein as found in legumes and seeds. Avoid foods high in sugars and trans-fatty acids such as hydrogenated oils and fried food, which burden the digestive system and lead to acne.

A German study published in 1989 investigated the connection between acne and constipation, finding that one ounce (30 grams) of bran cereal per day rapidly cleared acne.

To further enhance digestion and elimination, drink at least eight to 10 glasses of pure, filtered water daily. Start your day with a glass of purified water mixed with one teaspoon (five millilitres) of organic apple cider vinegar or freshly squeezed lemon juice. The vinegar and lemon juice provide digestive enzymes that are absent in cooked or processed food but help to reduce inflammation.

Further, eat foods that encourage the healthy cleansing functions of the liver. Choose artichokes, rhubarb, white and black radishes, soy, apples, and rolled oats.

Be sure to avoid foods you are allergic or sensitive to as well as soft drinks, which contain brominated vegetable oils that are aggravating to acne. Also avoid foods with: iodized salt, which aggravates acne; inorganic iron, which inactivates vitamin E, a nutrient that maintains cell membranes and is essential for healthy skin; and vitamin B12, which can produce or aggravate acne.

Clean habits
Good hygiene and an effective effort to improve lifestyle changes will result in better skin. Exercise regularly to stimulate circulation, the release of toxins, and proper functioning of the organs.

Take regular saunas. The skin is our largest detoxification organ and saunas can improve elimination through the skin. Saunas are often found at local community swimming pools.

“A nutritious diet and healthy hormones are the foundation for a clear complexion.”

Avoid using cosmetics or heavy moisturizers. Wash your face regularly with natural soaps or cleansers—avoiding ones with perfumes and scents. Natural and holistic skin cleansing lotions and moisturizers are excellent for acne and sensitive skin, as are tea tree oil topical ointments, which fight bacteria on the skin and reduce redness of blemishes. Look for them at your health food store.

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Keep hair clean as well, and wash pillowcases regularly in detergents free of colours or fragrances, rinsing twice.

Nutrient supplements can also be added to the diet to improve mild to moderate cases of acne. Some of these include:

- Vitamin A (5,000 IU)—Reduces sebum production and promotes smooth, clear skin.
- Folic acid (1 mg)—Reduces stress and ensures proper metabolism of hormones.
- Vitamin D (400 to 800 IU)—Promotes healing of skin.
- Vitamin E (400 IU twice daily)—Acts as an antioxidant and encourages tissue repair.
- Zinc (60 mg)—Essential for healthy immune function in the skin.
- Chromium picolinate (400 mcg)—Improves glucose tolerance and metabolism of essential fatty acids.
- Selenium (100 mcg)—Enhances glutathione and fights bacteria.
- Artichoke (160 to 320 mg three times daily)—Increases bile formation and flow to digest and absorb fats.
- Omega-3 fatty acid (1 to 2 Tbsp [30 to 60 mL] flaxseed oil or 2000 mg of fish oil)—Improves skin integrity.
- Reduced L-glutathione (45 mg)—Antibacterial, enhances immune function.
- Lactobacillus acidophilus (1 tsp [5 mL] twice daily)—Improves intestinal flora (especially important if you have taken antibiotics for condition).
- Garlic—Acts as a natural antibacterial.
- Vitamin C (1000 mg three times daily)—Repairs skin tissue and reduces inflammation.
- Digestive enzymes (1 or 2 capsules with meals)—Aids digestion.
- Milk thistle (Choose standardized extract and use as directed)—Detoxifies the liver.
- Chaste tree berry (Vitex) (use as directed)—Normalizes hormones.
- Dandelion root (drink as a beverage)—Detoxifies the liver.
- Guggul lipid (Choose standardized [Commiphora mukul] extract and take 500 mg three times daily)—Metabolizes fats.

For severe acne, please consult your health care provider. ☞

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