

ACNE

Who does it affect?

In the past, it was estimated that around 90% of 12 to 25 year olds would suffer from acne at some stage in their youth. However, a more recent survey carried out at Leeds University suggests that the figures have fallen to around 41% of young men and 26% of young women. The fall amongst young women is actually attributed to the increase in the use of the oral contraceptive so this may be worth considering!



What is less well known is that 12% of men and 3% of women continue to suffer throughout their adult life. It affects more teenagers than mature adults; more men than women ---- but at any time, it is a very distressing condition!!!

The Nature of the Condition:

It occurs when there is a malfunction in the "Pilosebaceous unit" – composed of the sebaceous gland, hair follicle, follicular canal & keratinocytes – cells lining the follicle. The malfunction is 5 staged:

- The keratinocytes proliferate
- The components of the "pilosebaceous units" cannot coordinate their components and dead cells and other debris build up
- Sebum production increases
- Pores are blocked
- Bacterial infection mainly *Propionibacterium acnes* take advantage causing inflammation, lesions & spots

The Symptoms:

- Whiteheads
- Blackheads
- Papules
- Pustules or suppurating spots!

Causal factors:

- **Hormones** – the male sex hormone 'androgen' increases the size of sebaceous glands, sebum secretion and keratin production. Androgens increase in both sexes during puberty.
- **Other hormonal changes** e.g. starting or stopping the contraceptive pill or before a menstrual period
- Acne that begins outside puberty may indicate a **disorder of the endocrine system**
- **A genetic predisposition** i.e. an inherited trait
- **Food sensitivities** and a build up of toxins due to poor elimination from the liver. The liver purifies the blood removing toxins & hormones that can aggravate acne

Avoid:

- Squeezing pimples ~ which forces sebum into the surrounding normal skin, causing redness and swelling & spreading the infection
- Harsh scrubbing or rubbing of skin which irritates the skin
- Using certain cosmetics that promote acne & chemical sensitivity with harsh abrasives, drying, high pH cleansers fragrances & other irritants:
 - Sodium lauryl sulphate
 - Sodium laureth sulphate
 - Alcohol
 - Lanolin
 - Propylene glycol
 - Isopropyl myristate
 - Caprylates
 - Mineral oils
 - Waxes
 - Fragrances
 - Coal tar
 - Sulphates
- Using some medications ~ such as steroids and lithium that can cause skin thinning & bruising
- Allowing emotional stress and nervous tension to build up if you can avoid it! A recent study found that acne severity correlated with increasing emotional stress

- Putting yourself on any extreme diets that result in severe weight loss that generate more wastes and toxins for your liver to contend with as well as cause hormonal imbalances & mood swings.
- Conversely, indulging in binges --- food or alcohol --- that have similar organic effects on the body & disrupt hormone balance or embark on sudden changes in diet that cause unnecessary stress & nutrient imbalances

Bio-Life Products that may benefit Acne sufferers:

Bio-Life MediCleanse™ Face Cleanser (face), Bath & Shower Gel (body), Pure Essence spray (for “hot spots”) & Moisturising Lotion to help restore skin to health.

Bio-Life MediCleanse™ contains ingredients with the essential qualities to maintain a healthy skin:

- Chemically friendly, gentle & non-abrasive skin cleansers and exfoliators that mimic the skins own essential oils namely Jojoba & Willow bark
- Natural antimicrobials & anti-inflammatories proven to eliminate *Propionibacterium acnes* & other secondary bacterial & fungal infections and to reduce inflammation namely the Leleshwa Essential oil & the Lichen Extract
- Pain relieving & mood enhancing essential oils – the Lichen Extract & the Leleshwa
- Anti-seborrhoeic oils namely Eucalyptus & Ylang ylang to reduce sebum production
- Wheatgerm & flax seed extracts rich in anti-oxidants that help to regulate cell proliferation and thus restore the skin to normal health
- Moisturisers that are rich in anti-oxidants & added vitamins A, B12 & E, that moisturize the skin, and maintain suppleness thus reducing the risk of scarring – wheatgerm oil, shea & cocoa butter, rosehip oil, aloe vera, glycerin, panthenol, tocopherols & Vit. A palmitate

Other natural remedies that may help

Vitamin A – essential for maintenance of epithelial tissue i.e. YOUR SKIN.

Zinc – helps heal acne blemishes, reduces inflammation and may help reduce sebum production. Adequate Zinc is essential for the synthesis & absorption of vitamin A in the body.

Vitamin E and selenium – increase levels of enzymes that prevent inflammation of the hair follicle.

Probiotics – normal flora also helps normal absorption of Nutrients in the body & maintain a balanced nutrient supply.

B group vitamins – help support the nervous system, skin and aid proper digestion.

Ginko biloba – is an anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory

Echinacea – stimulates the immune system

Chaste Tree – helps to balance hormones & can be especially helpful for pre-menstrual acne

Milk Thistle, Burdock & Yellow Dock – help support liver function & the elimination of toxins

Regular exercise can help reduce stress and increase blood circulation and oxygen penetration to the skin

Drinking 2 liters of water daily helps nourish the skin and remove wastes

You may be surprised to learn that scientists are still arguing about the influence of diet on acne! However, it is important that acne sufferers understand that whilst diet may not be the 'cause' of the acne, a change to a healthy diet can lead to faster healing and resistance. Keeping a "food diary" is definitely recommended. You may find that certain foods do aggravate the condition so you can avoid those particular foods.