

Lifestyle Choices Affecting Acne

Laundry

Fabric Softener

Do not use this in the washer and/or the dryer (no dryer sheets). The waxy residue gets on your pillowcases, towels, wash cloths, and sheets that have direct contact with the skin. The residue will clog pores of acne-prone individuals. If you want something to stop static cling in your dryer, you can get anti-static balls at Bed Bath and Beyond, Target, or online.

Detergent

Detergents with fragrance can cause skin irritation. Best to use fragrance-free such as Cheer Free, All Free & Clear, Tide Free, and Arm & Hammer Free.

No Water Softeners

There is some evidence that water softeners can lead to acne, especially those containing high amounts of potassium chloride.

Swimmers

Swimming pool disinfectants contain iodides and chlorine which can remain in the water, causing skin problems for frequent swimmers. We advise applying a thin layer of Vaseline before you get in the pool.

Sun Exposure and Acne

Although sun exposure causes desirable scaling and drying, it also damages the follicle, exacerbates dark spots, and causes skin cancer as well as premature aging. Always wear your sunscreen, even if it's overcast and/or raining.

Beware of Hand Lotions

If you are using a comedogenic hand lotion and then leaning your face on your hands (many do this in front of the computer) or sleeping on your hands, this could contribute to your acne.

Breakouts Around Your Mouth Area?

Many lip balms, toothpastes, and even facial tissues have comedogenic ingredients in them. So, if you see breakouts around your mouth area, this is possibly why. We recommend Vaseline or Aquaphor for a lip balm and toothpaste without SLS (sodium lauryl sulfate). Many well-known tissue brands are infused with things like coconut oil, isopropyl myristate, and SLS, all of which will clog the pores.

No Picking or Squeezing!

Instead, rub ice on pustules and pimples for a couple of minutes, twice a day. IMPORTANT: if you pick, squeeze, and break the skin, that scab will leave a red or dark mark that will be there for months, making your skin look WAY worse than if you left it alone.

Birth Control and Hormone Replacement

Avoid low estrogen birth control pills. "Lo" dose pills are higher in androgen hormones that can make acne-prone skin worse (see our handout on birth control pills). Norplant, Provera, Depo-Provera shots, most IUDs like Mirena, Skyla and Liletta can be a problem. Also, the Nuvo Ring can cause breakouts. Progesterone hormone replacement Premarin can be problematic. If you have polycystic ovaries, they will cause hormonal changes and breakouts.

Recreational and Prescription Drugs

Recreational drugs – Marijuana, cocaine, speed, and steroids used by bodybuilders Prescription drugs – topical and oral steroids, anticonvulsants, Lithium, thyroid meds, Quinine, Isoniazid, Immuran, Danazol, Gonadotrophin, Cyclosporin, Disulfuram, Phentermine, ADD/ADHD drugs. See handout if you want more information.

Chemicals

Coal tars (roofers), grease (mechanics, cooks, waiters), chlorinated industrial chemicals, dioxin.