

Acne Care

Control acne with a cleansing routine and a balanced pH

Acne vulgaris, which manifests itself predominantly during adolescence and sometimes during adulthood, is that notorious phenomenon that can turn your face into a disaster zone. It's the pimple that pops out of nowhere before an important interview, a few days before menstruation or when puberty knocks at the door.

The skin, as well as the body, must be in good health not only to look good but to protect itself from infection. Acne thrives on an imbalanced skin. Healthy skin has a pH of about 5.5, which is acid. Acne develops when the skin tends to be more alkaline. In comparison, water, which is alkaline, has a pH of 7. Certain soaps are also very alkaline.

When skin is not thoroughly cleansed, the sebum (the oil naturally secreted by the sebaceous glands) becomes oxidized. It then solidifies and slows down the elimination of dead skin cells. The skin reacts to this process by producing more dead skin cells, which throws the entire elimination system off balance.

Acne can be controlled with a regular and thorough skin cleansing routine, and by taking measures to optimize the skin's pH balance. The activity of the sebaceous glands should not be tampered with as this activity maintains the equilibrium of the hydrolipidic layers.

A bacterial cocktail

Some people are genetically predisposed to acne while others are prone to environment-, nutrition-, stress- or hormone-related acne. Generally speaking, a lack of basic skin hygiene leads to acne. The skin's imbalance triggers hyperactivity of the sebaceous, and sometimes the sudoriferous] glands, as well as the proliferation of dead cells.

Comedones, or pimples, are composed of a mixture of oxidized sebum, keratin, bacteria and cellular debris. The absence of oxygen inside the comedones encourages the proliferation of bacteria, already present on the surface of the skin.

Papules are the first signs of acne. These are external red pimples and they may be painful. White cells then come to the rescue. When they are done destroying the bacteria inside the papules, the red pimple becomes a pustule (a pimple with pus). The white matter inside the pustule (the pus) is made up of plasma substance, cellular debris and infection rejected by the body.

Among the bacteria found in comedones, we find:

- Propriani Bacterium acne (often called the PB bacteria, it is mostly responsible for acne vulgaris)
- Corine Bacterium acne
- Helico Bacter Pylori (also found in stomach ulcers)
- Staphylococcus (and other micro-organisms, such as yeast)

Most of those bacteria feed on oxidized sebum and toxins. They are normally present on the skin but as soon as they lack oxygen, they multiply and cause inflammation.

Hygiene routines

Certain habits may encourage or prevent comedones. Here are a few tips to help you (and your clients) make a difference in the occurrence of acne.

External hygiene

- Wash your hands often
- Clean your face at least twice a day
- Avoid touching your face with your hands

- Clean your phone regularly with an antibacterial cleaning agent
- Check the quality of your cosmetics – some are comedogenic
- D and C colours added to makeup are comedogenic
- Do not use cosmetics products (including sunscreen lotions) that have been open for a year or more – they are oxidized and may trigger acne
- Do not use rubbing alcohol – it throws the hydrolipid layer off balance.
- Change your pillow case every day (or place a towel on it and change it every day)
- Avoid dust (especially from old clothes, cardboard boxes, closets during spring-cleaning, etc.) or else wash your hands repeatedly while in contact with the above – nothing creates more comedones than dust
- Avoid touching bathroom counter tops

When acne is caused by stress, you may find that yoga, massages and relaxation techniques can help control the problem.

Internal hygiene

- Drink a lot of water
- Reduce your consumption of dairy products
- Eat at least 50 percent less fermented food, such as cheese
- Eat at least 50 percent less sugar
- Avoid alcoholic drinks (which also contain sugar)
- Pay attention to your vitamin E intake – an overdose may cause toxicity of the liver and trigger lesions on the skin
- Take Vitamin B and zinc supplements when acne is caused by hormonal imbalance – these substances normalize dehydrotestosterone and cortisol (two hormones secreted by the adrenal glands – some genetically predisposed people have hyperactive adrenal glands).

The professional approach

When dealing with acne, it is best not to remove your clients' pustules (pimples) because the skin is fragile and will easily scar. The skin should be left alone and the inflammation treated by destroying the bacteria with specialized topical solutions.

A lymphatic drainage of the face, performed in your salon or spa two to three times a week, for a total of 10 to 20 treatments, will help restore the skin's balance. Massages must be avoided and the skin should be treated very carefully and gently with non-comedogenic products.

It is important to find the real cause of the acne in order to better control it. It all starts, however, with a good basic cleansing of the skin and a few lifestyle adjustments.

There are two categories of acne:

INFLAMMATORY LESIONS

- Papules, pustules and cysts: visible red pimples and inflammation

NON-INFLAMMATORY LESIONS

- Opened comedones: also called blackheads, these are easy to extract
- Closed comedones: also called whiteheads, these have no opening – skin covers the impurities

NOTE: It is a common belief that because they show no visible redness, closed comedones are not inflamed. However, since there is no oxygen inside the pimple, bacteria multiplies and inflames the walls of the sebaceous follicle. This stage may be avoided with the help of exfoliation or microdermabrasion.



Manon Pilon is president of Europe Cosmétiques, director of education for Méthode Physiodermie and an internationally renowned speaker