

Better Nutrition  
Inside Out Acne  
By Karolyn A. Gazella

Sixty million Americans have acne, making it the most common skin disease in the United States. According to the American Dermatologist Association, nearly 85 percent of people between the ages of 12 and 24 and 20 percent of adults have acne.

Acne is caused by one or more factors including excess oil production, poor exfoliation, genetics, diet, stress, and hormones. Several forms of acne range from clogged pores resulting in white and black heads to severe infected nodules or cysts. Increased hormone production during puberty or menstruation can cause excess oil production, providing a perfect environment for the Propionium bacteria to flourish on the skin's surface. Infectious, painful acne is often the combination of trapped dead skin cells and dirt and increased oil production and bacteria.

Many people trying to control their acne resort to harsh prescription or over-the-counter medications that dry the skin but then cause excess oil production, creating a vicious cycle. Acne can be controlled and even eliminated completely by utilizing a comprehensive, inside-out natural treatment plan.

### **From The Outside**

Because acne is such an exterior condition, most people want to deal with it from the outside first. This is possible by following a simple, four-step strategy that includes using:

- a nontoxic exfoliating cleanser with antibacterial ingredients
- essential oils such as lemongrass to calm overactive oil glands
- a natural mud mask and exfoliating peel
- a flavonoid-rich, hydrating renewal cream

Cranberry, tea tree, and totarol from the New Zealand Totara tree are effective antibacterial ingredients. Fruit flavonoids, enzymes, and herbs such as aloe, green tea, and shea help hydrate, calm, and support skin cells. Fruit pulps such as pumpkin puree are rich sources of vitamin A and other carotenoids, which can help heal acne.

"The combination of dead skin, dirt, and excessive oil create fertile ground for the Propionim bacteria to thrive and are at the heart of most acne problems," explains Dr. Sabarinathan K.G., a research scientist who specializing in finding unique and effective skin care ingredients. Dr. K.G., who is with the Center of Advanced Studies in Agricultural Microbiology with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in India, says "to get rid of acne, the focus must be on gentle, consistent exfoliation, cleansing, and hydration to help normalize oil production." Dr. K.G. has found that totarol is especially effective against the Propionim bacteria.

It is important to use products that contain nontoxic ingredients so as not to dry or irritate the skin. Products that excessively strip the skin of its natural

moisture content can actually worsen acne. Synthetic chemicals and toxic ingredients in skin care products can also increase inflammation and damage skin tissue.

According to author and clinician Ray Sahelian, MD, acne is primarily an inflammatory process. Dr. Sahelian suffered from teenage and adult acne. He changed his diet to alleviate his condition.

### **Anti-Acne Diet**

“I strongly believe food influences acne severity,” says Dr. Sahelian. “I prefer to approach acne treatment from the food and diet perspective as opposed to drugs.”

Dr. Sahelian is not alone in his thinking. Many studies have shown that dairy products in particular can irritate or cause acne. It is important to determine dietary acne triggers, which can vary from one individual to another. Food allergies can also cause acne. In addition to dairy, food allergens that can contribute to acne include chocolate, refined carbohydrates, and nuts.

All forms of simple sugars, especially in the form of soda, have been shown to contribute to acne. Dr. Sahelian reminds his patients that in addition to sugar, eating breads, chips, processed flour foods, and foods that contain trans or hydrogenated fats are also likely to promote acne.

A diet that emphasizes organic vegetables, fresh fish, and low-fat, high-fiber foods will help control acne. In addition, drink at least eight, 8-ounce glasses of water daily to stay hydrated inside and out. Dietary supplements are available to provide anti-acne nutrients and help compliment a healthful diet.

Acne can be emotionally, as well as physically, damaging. Through dietary changes and the use of nontoxic skin care products, many people are able to completely alleviate their acne.