

SKIN SNAG 1

S.O.S.

(Save Our Skin)

If you're fighting pimples, oily skin and whiteheads and blackheads, here's a battle plan to help keep your skin in the clear.

By SARAHLE CAMPBELL BYRNE

Whiteheads & Blackheads

You're religious about cleansing, scrubbing and toning your skin but you still notice whiteheads and blackheads all over your face. The worst part is, you are tempted to pick and squeeze them with your fingers! Don't even think about it, because blackheads and whiteheads can lead to acne! If not treated properly, you're likely to have bigger problems on your face.

THE LOWDOWN

Whiteheads and blackheads are found at the opening of our pores, usually on the nose, forehead and chin. Both are filled with plugs of sebum (that oil that nourishes your skin) and dead skin cells, but blackheads have blackened sebum as a result of being exposed to air.

Occurring sporadically in one of the thousands of pores we have on our face, whiteheads and blackheads are usually caused by a



number of factors, including going too hard when removing your makeup, not changing your face products, or using unsuitable skincare products.

There is no straight answer as to why some people are more prone to whiteheads and blackheads. But research has shown that oily skin is a factor. You can also blame your genes and hormones.

DAMAGE CONTROL

- Blackheads can be cleared regularly using pore strips. But not whiteheads, because these will tightly sealed. Do not try to extract blackheads with your fingers or use a blackhead remover as this can cause permanent damage to the pores and will most certainly cause a pimple to form in its place.
- Resist the urge to scrub the blackheads as this may further irritate them, which will cause an infection and leave scars.
- Look out for products with salicylic acid. According to Dr. Jean Ho, a consultant dermatologist in private practice, salicylic acid, also referred to as beta Hydroxy Acid (BHA), is frequently used as a skin exfoliant to help remove dead skin, unclog pores and promote the penetration of topical treatments.
- Gentle exfoliation should be done once a week or fortnight.

Acne

If you're in your 30s but your skin is still prone to breakouts, it may be time to breakouts. And sometimes, your pimples start to flare up because of an increase in stress. Well, here's the bad news for some of us: some is not something that pleases our hormones. It can continue well into adulthood. The good news is you can get effective treatment for your acne - if you know what to look for.

THE LOWDOWN

Acne occurs when your pores become clogged. Each pore is an opening to a canal called a follicle, which contains a strand of hair and an oil gland. Normally, the oil glands keep the skin lubricated by secreting a substance called sebum. When the glands produce too much sebum, the pores can become blocked, accumulating dirt, debris and bacteria. This blockage is sealed a plug or comedone. The plug may cause the follicle wall to bulge and produce a whitehead or closed comedone.

At Vanessa Phua, Family Physician with an interest in aesthetic medicine at Aesthetics Health, explains that the evolution of acne begins with a whitehead that oxidises to become a blackhead (open comedone). Its contents then become inflamed and infected with bacteria, giving rise to an acne papule (pimple) or pustule (pox) that can become enlarged, hard and encysted (cyst).

There are several causes of adult acne: stress, bad cosmetics, genetics and hormones. Stress throws the body's balance out of whack, and skin becomes oily before a stressful event. During stressful periods, you may also not take care of yourself as you normally would, so you probably get less sleep, are less careful about your skincare routine and you may not get the requisite eight glasses of water daily, which is key to keeping skin healthy and smooth.

SKIN SNAG 2

Bad cosmetics can also lead to skin breakouts. Have a breather in your skin's way of letting you to re-examine your makeup products that block your pores. In addition, washing the skin to gently or oily cosmetics and hair products, and the friction or pressure caused by items such as telephones, helmets, tight collars and backpacks can exacerbate acne.

Acne runs in the family - if your parents had acne, you're likely to develop it too. Then, for some women, acne is a monthly affair during menstruation when there are cyclical changes of the female hormones.

DAMAGE CONTROL

- Look for beauty products that say "non-comedogenic" which do not block pores.
- Never pop your pimples as this may cause scarring.
- Say no to facials - hot steam can make acne worse.
- Practice good skincare habits. Dr Ho suggests washing your face at least twice daily with an acne wash that contains salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide. These cleansers are less drying, than soaps that are labelled "for sensitive skin".
- Avoid over-exfoliating as this can irritate the skin and worsen your acne. Instead use a gentle exfoliating scrub once a week or every fortnight, and include salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide. The latter contains ingredients such as zinc, which is known for its anti-inflammatory properties, and Nigella arvensis or NFA, which maintains normal skin renewal.

The Pimple Profile

Typically, acne appears on the face, neck, chest, back and shoulders, as these areas have the highest density of oil glands. Here are the following forms it can take:

STAGE 1: COMEDONES

Whiteheads & blackheads
Some acne appears as comedones, also known as whiteheads and blackheads. Some may have a central opening filled with blackened sebum.

STAGE 2: PAPULES

These are small raised bumps that signal an inflammatory infection in the hair follicles. They may be red and tender.

STAGE 2: PUSTULES

These are small raised pustules and red, tender bumps with white pus at their base.

STAGE 4: NODULES

These are large, solid, painful lumps beneath the surface of the skin, and skin becomes oily before a stressful event. During stressful periods, you may also not take care of yourself as you normally would, so you probably get less sleep, are less careful about your skincare routine and you may not get the requisite eight glasses of water daily, which is key to keeping skin healthy and smooth.

STAGE 6: CYSTS

These are painful, fluctuant lumps beneath the surface of the skin. These lumps sometimes can resolve themselves and permanent scars, if not treated properly.



It's never too early to consult a dermatologist, even if you have comedones (stage 1). The doctor can conduct a thorough assessment of your skin's needs and start you on a suitable treatment right away.

Oiliness

You get up in the morning and notice that your pillow has oil stains. Later than last night after cleansing, your face feels like an oil slick. And the shine on your face makes you cringe at the idea of flash photography. Anyone struggling with greasy, shiny skin might argue that the mere existence of sebum is a curse. Not. Mother Nature intended for it to serve a beneficial purpose.

THE LOWDOWN

The cause of oily skin lies in your genetic makeup - an excess of a hormone called androgen (testosterone) (DHT), which triggers the sebaceous glands to produce sebum. When you're in a stressful situation, sebum plays an important role in lubricating the skin and hair, protecting them from external environmental challenges like dehydration and maintaining healthy and loose. However, an overabundance of sebum caused by the sebaceous glands going overtime leads to oily skin. Too much sebum produces for the skin's silken, bloated pores, nourishes bacteria that live on the skin and contributes to acne flare-ups.

DHT usually first appears at puberty in both girls and boys when it causes hair on the skin in the form of acne. The menarche (first menstruation) is usually in both girls and boys when it causes hair on the skin in the form of acne. The menarche (first menstruation) is usually in both girls and boys when it causes hair on the skin in the form of acne.

But perhaps there is a silver lining to having oily skin. It will not age as quickly as other skin types and it is less sensitive to external stresses like the sun and pollution. By age 40, you will probably be wrinkle-free!

DAMAGE CONTROL

- The trickiest to use a powerful cleanser for oily skin is tempting, but this will only stimulate the oil glands to produce more sebum and the renewed greasy cycle will continue. The solution is to remove excess sebum without drying the skin. Avoid harsh cleansers and alcohol-based toners that will strip too much oil from your face.
- Dr Lisa Ling, Medical Director at The Sloane Clinic, suggests using a foaming cleanser that contains Alpha Hydroxy Acid (AHAs) and BHA, which are effective in dissolving oils and exfoliating dead skin cells.
- When checking makeup and skincare, buy oil-free products. Opt for non-comedogenic and non-comedogenic products that will not clog pores. The key is to use the right products to help your skin maintain the ideal amount of oil.
- Use products that remove shine, such as blotting papers and mattifying lotions.
- Always remember to remove your makeup before going to bed. If you don't, a lot of dirt and residue are left on the skin. Pores become clogged due to the makeup and this irritates the sebaceous glands.

Topical Zone

Three treatments have tried-and-true active ingredients to control oil and fight blemishes.

Esthetician's Choice
Acne Clearing Complex, \$24.95
Gentle, non-irritating, non-drying formula, perfect for healing and reducing redness.

Clean & Clear
Control Free, \$5.95
Oil-free, non-comedogenic, fragrance-free formula.

Non-Flammable
Acne Control, \$14.95
Oil-free, non-comedogenic, fragrance-free formula.

Clinelle
Acne Control
Oil-free, non-comedogenic, fragrance-free formula.

Bioré
Acne Control
Oil-free, non-comedogenic, fragrance-free formula.

50% OFF
\$10.00
\$20.00

Non-Flammable Acne Control, \$14.95. Clinelle Acne Control, \$14.95. Bioré Acne Control, \$14.95. Total Free Zone, \$5.95. All products are non-comedogenic, fragrance-free, and oil-free.

GLOW

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"Dr Low Chai Ling, Medical Director at the Sloane Clinic, suggests using a foaming cleanser that contains AHA and BHA, which are effective in dissolving oils and exfoliating dead skin cells."