



Complexion Imperfection Fixes

Reported by: *Stephanie Harris/Marchita Johnson*
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For years, high school junior Elizabeth Hall has struggled with complexion imperfections.

"It made me feel a little awkward around my friends," said Hall.

Hall works hard to zap pimples year round, but says this time of year can leave its mark on her face and back.

"My acne seems to pop up more often during the beginning of the school year, when exams start, and when I'm more stressed out about my grades," said Hall.

According to Dr. Diane Madfes, spokesperson with the American Academy of Dermatology, preliminary data shows there is a connection between stress and acne. She says that you do need to have a predisposition towards acne to have it exacerbated by stress.

Dr. Madfes says she would like to see more research done on stress and acne, although it is difficult to control the multiple factors that contribute to it, such as environment and genetics.

Dr. Madfes also says that when it's time to head back to school, she sees about a 20% increase in the number of teens and young adults in her office.

"When your stress levels go up, you get a little bit of an elevation of a hormone called cortisol. And what that does is it turns on the sebaceous glands in your skin that triggers the acne," said Madfes.

"Facing" the problem is an important first step, but following the prescribed treatment plan can be tough work.

Dermatologist Julie C. Harper says often patients need to know acne treatments take time.

"I would say it takes two months to see a 40 to 50% improvement in acne, and it really takes four months to see 80 to 90% improvement," said Harper.

And problems can occur if patients apply too much or too little of a treatment, or scrub too hard.

"They see acne. They see bumps. They think they can somehow scrub those down. You're not going to get better faster. You're going to get more irritation and dryness," said Harper.

Many older acne medications have also been linked to irritation and dryness. It typically occurs within the first few weeks of use. That's what happened to Hall.

"It cracked my skin, especially right here on my nose, because that's where most of my acne was. And

that hurt pretty bad," said Hall.

In cases like Hall's, our experts say teens or young adults may lose patience and put away the prescriptions for good. And that can lead to scarring.

So, how do you get your child to stick to an acne plan? Dr. Madfes says make it part of a routine.

"If you put your acne medicines right next to your toothbrush, after you put your toothbrush down you can put on your acne medication," said Madfes.

According to Dr. Madfes, some of the newer, gentler medications on the market include Pacnex, Atralin, Epiduo and Acanya. Dr. Madfes and Dr. Harper say these formulas combine Benzyl Peroxide with other acne fighting ingredients, as well as a moisturizer to prevent dryness and irritation. They say these prescriptions are equally effective as the older ones available and patients are more apt to be compliant with them.

"We have products now that are formulated to have moisturizers right into the base and they allow people to get improvement without having to go through so much of that irritation," said Harper.

Hall now uses one. Every so often she forgets to apply, but overall...she says her skin now makes the grade.

"It's a lot clearer. It's a lot smoother," said Hall.

Both doctors say there are effective over-the-counter medicines for early, mild acne. Look for ingredients like benzyl peroxide and salicylic acid. Of course, each case is different. If you have questions, consult a dermatologist.

We also spoke to American Academy of Dermatology spokesperson Amy Derrick, who added, "I agree that the formulations (or vehicles) have improved significantly over the past several years. The active ingredient now can be delivered in a more patient-friendly vehicle. Patients do not like to have both acne and a rash from their acne medication."

For more information:

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Diane Madfes, M.D., P.C.

American Academy of Dermatology

Dr. Diane C. Madfes is a board-certified dermatologist specializing in dermatology and dermatologic surgery, utilizing cutting-edge technology and state-of-the-art machinery. She is also a spokesperson for the American Academy of Dermatology.

Among Dr. Madfes' specialties are facial rejuvenation, the use of fillers (such as fat and collagen), Botulinum injections to smooth facial lines, ablative and non-ablative laser resurfacing, sclerotherapy, chemical peels, and general skin care.

Currently, Dr. Madfes is a solo practitioner of an uptown Manhattan office and makes time to see patients in Greenwich, her hometown. She is also an attending physician at Beth Israel Medical Center and Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York. The doctor is a member of numerous professional societies, including the American Academy of Dermatology, the American Society of Dermatologic Surgery, the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery, the Women's Medical Association, and the American Society of Liposuction Surgery.

After receiving her medical degree in 1992, Dr. Madfes completed an internship at Yale-New Haven Hospital in the department of internal medicine. She then began a three-year residency at Albert Einstein

College of Medicine, where she trained in dermatologic surgery, sclerotherapy, laser surgery, cosmetic dermatology, and general dermatology.

Julie C. Harper, M.D.

The Dermatology and Skin Care Center of Birmingham

Julie C. Harper, MD, is a Clinical Associate Professor of Dermatology at the University of Alabama-Birmingham.

She received her medical degree from the University of Missouri, Columbia School of Medicine, and went on to complete an internship in Internal Medicine. She completed her dermatology residency at the University of Missouri, Columbia and her undergraduate degree at Southeast Missouri State University.

Dr. Harper is founding director of the American Acne and Rosacea Society, a task force member of American Academy of Dermatology Telemedicine, a former American Academy of Dermatology Leadership Retreat Participant, and a former Women's Dermatological Society Board of Directors Young Physician Representative.

She has written and spoken on the subject of acne and Rosacea extensively. Some of Dr. Harper's writings can be found in journals such as Practical Dermatology Advances in Dermatology, and Cecil's Review of General Internal Medicine 8th edition.
