
Naturopathic Treatment of Acne

The naturopathic approach to acne treatment focuses on diet and lifestyle modifications, along with key nutrients that address the causes of acne (see Acne handout).

Lifestyle Recommendations:

- Natural sunlight exposure can improve acne—just avoid sunburn
- Avoid oil-based cosmetics/creams/cleansers—instead consider tea tree oil based cleansers, green clay masks, calendula soap, water-based moisturizers, water-based or mineral makeup
- Wash face twice a day with calendula soap or tea tree oil cleanser—avoid excess scrubbing
- Stress reduction to prevent further breakouts
- Wash pillowcases weekly using chemical free detergent

Diet Recommendations:

- Avoid fried foods and foods with trans fatty acids—oxidized and trans fatty acids promote inflammation of acne lesions
- Avoid dairy—milk contains trans fatty acids and non-organic milk & mild products may contain hormones
- Eliminate refined sugars from the diet—focus instead on whole grains, vegetables, limited fresh fruits (acne has been described by some as “diabetes of the skin”)
- Consider a higher protein diet—this will inhibit the 5-alpha-reductase enzyme responsible for converting testosterone into its more potent form; a high-carb diet has the opposite effect
- Consume cold water fish 2 times per week—omega 3 fatty acids are anti-inflammatory and can help to alter sebum composition favorably
- Stay hydrated—drink lots of filtered or pure spring water every day and avoid caffeine and sodas

Supplementation Recommendations:

- **Beta carotene &/or Vitamin A:** helps to decrease sebum production; dose is 25,000 iu or more of beta carotene per day (Cautions: high levels of vitamin A can cause toxicity—discontinue use and notify physician if headache, fatigue, joint and muscle pain, mood swings, chapped lips or dry skin develop; sexually active women: do not exceed 5,000 iu per day unless effective birth control is used due to risk of birth defects)
- **Zinc:** inhibits 5-alpha-reductase, improves skin healing (many people are deficient); dose is zinc sulfate 50 mg 3x/day or zinc picolinate 100 mg/day for 3 months (Caution: balance with 2-3 mg Copper to prevent copper depletion)
- **Chromium:** helps regulate blood sugar and improve insulin sensitivity; dose is 200-400 mcg/day
- **Selenium:** antioxidant that helps maintain glutathione peroxidase levels which helps prevent the inflammation of acne; dose is 200 mcg/day
- **Vitamin E:** helps regulate Vitamin A and selenium levels as well as improving skin healing; dose is 400-600 iu per day
- **Vitamin C:** important antioxidant; dose is 1,000 mg 3x/day
- **Vitamin B6:** especially helpful with acne that flares premenstrually or induced by oral contraceptives; acts as a diuretic to reduce swelling of the skin around the opening of pores; dose is 25-50 mg 3x/day
- **Vitamin B5 (Pantothenic acid):** important in fat metabolism; dose 2.5 g 4 x/day for up to 2 weeks (can also be used topically in 20% cream applied to lesions 4-6 x/day).