



BEAUTY: Why Your Skin-Care Routine Should Change During Your Period



There's only one week out of the month that I dread even more than the one before rent is due — and that's PMS week (which can even extend into two-week territory, because life isn't fair, y'all).

Whether you're on birth control, which regulates your period symptoms, or not, things are going haywire inside your body. The sudden hormonal changes can take a serious toll on your face — one that your normal skin-care routine might not be able to solve. If you've ever found yourself struggling to control the pimples that seem to pop up overnight, consider doing an overhaul on your medicine cabinet and building a skin-care army specifically for the week of hell.

We tasked the experts with coming up with a plan of attack to keep our skin clear during this time of the month, because it's important to know what you *really* need before spraying, scrubbing, and spotting different ingredients all over your face. Click through to find out.

Do you dread period-related breakouts just as much as we do? Let us know in the comments, below, and tell us your favorite, tried-and-true PMS beauty warriors.



Before you even pull out the box of tampons and dark chocolate, PMS begins to wreak havoc on your complexion.

“Skin tends to look its worst during the days leading up to your period,” says Debbie Palmer, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and the medical director of Dermatology Associates of New York.

Why, exactly? Well, far more hormonal chemicals than usual are being released and flooding your body. “There is a decrease in estrogen and surge of progesterone and testosterone about a week before your period. This surge can cause oil production and pores to become clogged with sebum, making them appear larger,” Dr. Palmer tells us.

Start out by incorporating a heavy-duty mask into your routine at the first hint of a possible breakout. The clay will draw out any gunk in your pores that could eventually breed acne bacteria.

Ren Invisible Pores Detox Mask, \$34, available at Ren.



There are many reasons why pimples pop up on certain parts of the face — and when — but one spot that is especially important to pay attention to is the lower half of the face. Michele Green, MD, a board-certified dermatologist, explains that when acne tends to appear on the chin and along the jawline, it's typically hormonal.

Combat this by swapping your gentle cream cleanser for a more powerful wash that contains salicylic acid.

Peter Thomas Roth Beta Hydroxy Acid 2% Acne Wash, \$38, available at Ulta Beauty.



Salicylic acid is the preferred ingredient when it comes to clearing out pores overwhelmed with bacteria. But be careful not to abuse the stuff. If you're prone to dry patches, this can make them worse, so build up your tolerance slowly.

Mario Badescu Acne Facial Cleanser, \$15, available at Mario Badescu.



While we tend to associate retinoids with anti-aging, not acne, it can actually be a savior when it comes to irritation and inflamed blemishes. True, it's important to determine when, why, and how to use a retinol-based product, but for most of us, it's a good addition to our routine, so long as the concentration is low.

“I always recommend using a retinoid because it will not only even out pigmentation, but will also reduce your risk of breakouts and give a smoother texture to the skin,” adds **Ava Shamban, MD**, a board-certified dermatologist and founder of AvaMD.

SkinCeuticals Retinol 1.0, \$63, available at SkinCeuticals.



During the PMS period, your skin is at its most sensitive, so you want to pay attention to the base makeup you're applying. Ask yourself, *Does it contain oil that may clog pores? Is it medium-to-full coverage? Does it have SPF?*

“Results suggest that testosterone may contribute to changes in women’s motivation to wear attractive makeup and, potentially, their motivation to appear attractive in general,” a study completed by psychologists at the University of Glasgow reports. As much as you’ll want to cover up, less is more for healing down the line.

Supergoop! Everyday Sunscreen Broad Spectrum SPF 50, \$19, available at Sephora.



Switch out your makeup the same way you might switch your skin products. Make sure you’re not only applying it with clean brushes, fingers, or sponges, but you’re also easing up on how much you’re using.

Opt for an oil-free tinted moisturizer to give coverage *and* healthy hydration.

Laura Mercier Tinted Moisturizer Broad Spectrum SPF 20, \$44, available at Sephora.



“With regard to makeup, you must be more diligent about washing your face and removing makeup, especially if you are prone to breakouts,” says Dr. Shamban. “You want to allow your skin to breathe.”

The Body Shop Tea Tree Skin Clearing Mattifying Facial Toner, \$14, available at The Body Shop.



Unfortunately, you’re not out of the clear once PMS ends. “During your period, levels of estrogen are low and inflammatory prostaglandins are high,” says Dr. Palmer. “[Low levels of estrogen] can cause your skin to look blotchy and leave you feeling tired and run down. It is during these times that I stress to use topical and oral antioxidants to help soothe your skin. My favorite ingredients are coffee arabica, green tea, and vitamin C.”

Proactiv+ Green Tea Moisturizer, \$42, available at [Proactiv](#).



If you already have a simple routine, we don't advocate adding in a ton of new products at once. But if you'd like to make some minor changes, try double-cleansing: Start with a brightening wipe, then use your regular makeup remover. Ta-da — squeaky-clean skin!

Ole Henriksen The Clean Truth Cleansing Cloths: Brightening, \$15, available at [Sephora](#).



If you have dry skin, incorporate a deeply hydrating — but lightweight — cream (gel formulas are great) for day and night. If your complexion is dull, gentle peel pads and scrubs will help to get dead skin cells off the surface and reveal radiance.

Remember: It's most important to pay attention to what your skin is telling you and consult your dermatologist for an extra-personalized plan

The Body Shop Vitamin E Nourishing Night Cream, \$22, available at The Body Shop.

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