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Adult Acne: Why It Occurs and How to Get Rid of It

Lauren Hubbard | October 16, 2017

Many of us spent our teenage years fantasizing about being a grown-up: You'd have your own house, make your own money, and wake up with flawless skin, because that's what adults do, right? The reality — you know, the part where you've got a mortgage and adult acne — is a lot less exciting. We can't do much about the house and the money, but we can help you out with that last issue. Here, the ultimate guide to dealing with adult breakouts.



Is This Happening to Everyone?

We tend to think of acne as a problem for the young, and there's a good reason for that: Most of us start developing acne and often have our most severe acne during our teen years. Sadly, that doesn't mean zits magically disappear the day you turn 20.

"Acne occurs frequently after the teenage years and at significantly higher rates in women compared with men," says Doris Day, a clinical associate professor of dermatology at NYU Langone Medical Center and the author of *100 Questions & Answers About Acne* (Jones & Bartlett Learning). In fact, Day points out, "as many as 50 percent of women will suffer from acne at some point in their adult lives," with more than half of women in their 20s and 35 percent of women in their 30s experiencing some form of acne.

As if that wasn't enough bad news, Joshua Zeichner, the director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, says the number of woman who will experience acne at some point during adulthood is rising. "It is unclear exactly why this

is happening, however it may be due to a combination of stress, dietary factors and changing hormones," he said.

And Chill Out

"Stress leads to increased cortisol levels," says dermatologist **Ava Shamban**. Like testosterone, cortisol is a hormone that can increase oiliness as well as inflammation. Not a good combo when you want to avoid being red in the face. Once upon a time, our bodies produced cortisol only when we were in danger, but nowadays, it's much more likely to flood your system in response to a looming deadline than in response to a predator in the underbrush. So when your acne starts acting up, take a minute to figure out whether there's anything you're freaking out over, then unload all of that skin-wrecking stress.

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