

# 10 Things *About...*

## Childhood Acne

by Kathryn Leverette, L.E.

**A**cne is becoming more common in children ages seven to 12, probably because puberty, menstrual cycles, and adrenal activity are starting at a younger age. A family history of acne can fuel this hormonal fire. In the past, it was assumed acne was just a normal part of growing up and young people would simply grow out of it. These days, the negative psychological impact on self-esteem and risk of permanent scarring are well-known. Many parents are driven to find answers online and motivated to seek professional help from aestheticians and dermatologists.

**1** Pre-adolescent acne is easy to recognize and often starts with small whiteheads on the nose. Progression can be gradual, with acne spreading to the forehead and chin, the so-called T-zone, and inflamed bumps.

**2** Skin care professionals need to encourage parents not to ignore their child's acne. The emotional distress and scarring it causes can impact young people for the rest of their lives. That said, discourage parents from over-focusing and commenting on their child's acne, which will only make them more self-conscious and stressed.



**3** Acne should be treated with topical products that contain acne-fighting ingredients like low-percentage benzoyl peroxide, mandelic acid, and salicylic acid. Advise young clients to be consistent and wean on gradually to prevent side effects like redness, stinging, and excessive peeling. Once or twice a day, ice cubes can be rubbed on red, inflamed pimples in a continuous circular motion for two minutes to reduce swelling and inflammation. Antibiotics should be avoided or limited, as they lead to antibiotic resistance, which is becoming a global problem.

**4** Adolescents should cleanse gently twice a day to help remove dead skin cells and excess oil. They should cleanse with a low-lathering, sulfate-free face wash with their fingertips, not a rough washcloth or buffing pad. Over-washing and aggressive scrubbing can dry and irritate the skin, worsen inflamed acne, and cause stinging and excessive peeling from acne products.

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**5** Comedogenic ingredients must be avoided. Make sure the client's skin and hair products, moisturizer, sunscreen, and makeup all non-comedogenic. Look at laundry products, which should always be free of perfumes and dyes, and to avoid fabric softener sheets, which leave a waxy residue and clog pores. All new clothing and bedding should be washed before use.

**6** Tell clients to step away from the mirror and resist the urge to pick. Picking pushes bumps deeper into the follicle, slows the healing process, invites secondary infection, and introduces airborne bacteria. Parents should also be cautioned not to pop, pick, or attempt to extract their child's acne.



**7** Adolescents should not tan. Both indoor and outdoor tanning can cause cumulative sun damage. While a tan may appear to camouflage and clear acne at first, as it fades, blemishes and scars often become darker and more pronounced. Everyone needs sunscreen, even if their skin is naturally dark. Most acne medications can cause sun sensitivity. Using sunscreen on a daily basis will help acne blemishes and scars fade away faster and prevent sun damage and skin cancer down the line.



**8** Focus on what could be causing friction. Helmets and chin guards cause friction that can irritate pores and fire up more acne, so line them with layers of felt, using Velcro. Warn clients to avoid leaning or sleeping on their phone, hand or arm. Hats, caps, headbands, scarves, backpacks, and glasses can also cause friction.



**9** Advise the parents to pay attention to their child's diet: Dairy, peanuts and peanut butter, fast food, processed food, salty snacks, seaweed, soup, sports drinks, and excess sugar will only worsen acne.

**10** Look at hormone levels if a young female client is experiencing an irregular menstrual cycle and/or their acne problem worsens dramatically and fails to respond to treatment.

Prevention includes educating young people and their parents about acne, helping them cope with stress of adolescence, maintaining a consistent acne skin care routine, avoiding pore-clogging ingredients and acne-aggravators, evaluating the many lifestyle issues that affect acne, and encouraging families to make smarter food choices.



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