

clear

Approaches to Skin Care, Health & Wellness

Peer Pressure: Sorting It Out

Great Teen Websites

Tips for Fab Abs

No Pain, No Gain?

Fighting
Acne:
Be Treatment
Savvy



Dear Friend,

This issue of CLEAR is dedicated to teens who want to clear up their skin and feel good about themselves. In these pages you'll find lots of great information—including a guide on how to care for acne-prone skin and use acne medications to achieve the intended results.

Why is it so crucial that you understand your skin care and treatment regimen and follow it closely? Let me explain by relating a situation I once had:

When I decided to take up tennis I had to have just the right shoes, clothing, and tennis racquet. I signed up for lessons and enthusiastically jogged onto the court. I certainly had the right tools to play good tennis. I even looked the part—off the court. But once the first ball came bounding over the net, it became crystal-clear that it didn't matter that I had a really nice tennis racquet. Even though I had all of the right equipment, the tennis balls kept whizzing by. The tennis racquet remained nearly motionless in my hand because I didn't know how to use it.

Having the right "gear" certainly is important when managing acne. Your doctor can give you instructions on skin care and prescribe top-of-the-line medications. But, as I learned with tennis, it's not enough to simply have the right tools. It doesn't matter how good your treatment plan is if you don't put it to proper use.

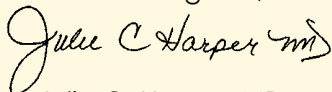
You see, clearing up acne may start in the doctor's office—but real, meaningful results require day-to-day management of your acne at home.

Elsewhere in these pages are other terrific tips. Be sure to read CLEAR cover-to-over so you can get the most from:

- An article on how to deal with peer pressure
- A "Lifestyle" section on fitness, great teen websites, hair care, and more.

I hope you find this magazine helpful and refer to it if future questions arise. Remember, being informed empowers you on the road to clearer skin.

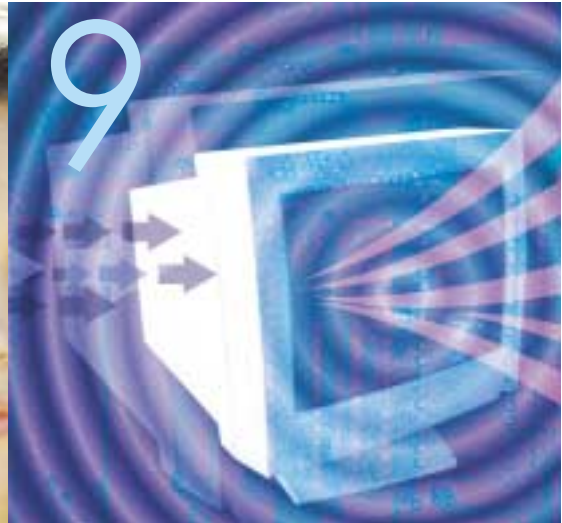
Warmest regards,



Julie C. Harper, MD
Editor-in-Chief

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Approaches to Skin Care, Health & Wellness



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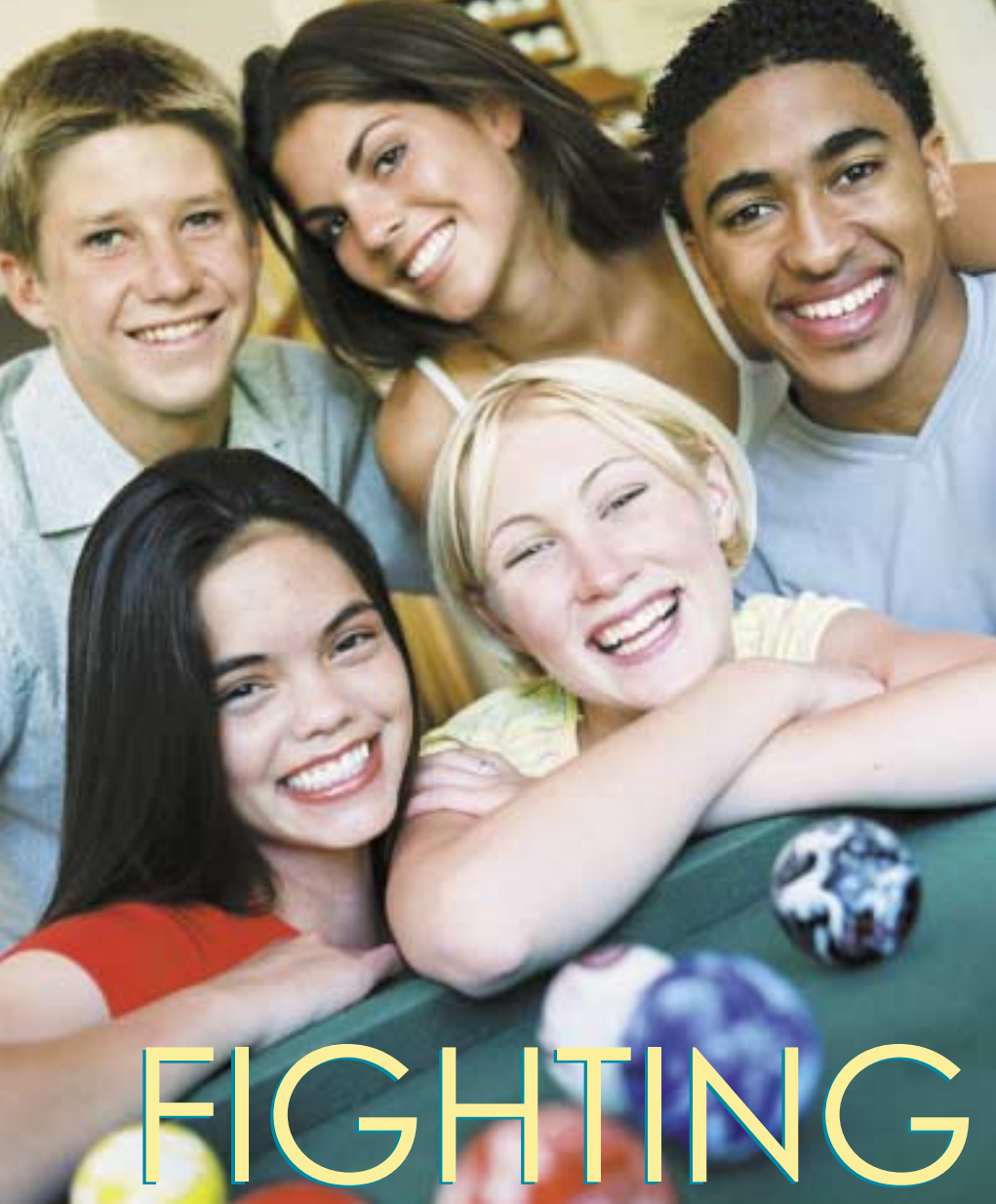
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ACNE:

A Guide to Following the Treatment Plan

by Julie C. Harper, MD

In the battle against acne, you play a crucial role. Just how well you follow the doctor's instructions can make the difference between great or poor results. This article will help you sort it all out—and achieve success.

Finally, you've been given the ingredients to clear up your acne. You've just left the doctor's office armed with a prescription that promises to make your acne disappear. Your doctor and the nursing staff have explained how to use these medications, and they've counselled you on skin care for acne-prone skin.

This all sounds great, until you get home with various bottles and tubes of medications and skin care products—and you realize you really didn't hear most of what the doctor said. Which product goes where, and when? Can I put two medications on my skin at the same time? What do I do if they irritate my skin? Can I wear makeup? Go out in the sun? How quickly will all this work?

It's tough to grasp all the different usage instructions and possible side effects for multiple medications in just one office visit. Even if you do hear and understand everything your doctor says, you're bound to have questions once you leave the office. So, to help you better manage your acne at home, use this article as a quick-reference guide. Of course, if you've got questions or concerns regarding your treatment that are not included in this article, call your doctor.

Caring for Acne-Prone Skin

First, remember this: acne is not caused by "dirt" and it cannot be "scrubbed off". In fact, over-washing acne-prone skin can make breakouts even worse. In general, keep your skin care regimen to a bare min-

imum while undergoing treatment for acne. Keep in mind that the goal is to get your skin clear.

The most effective tools to help you manage your acne include the medications prescribed by your doctor. Adding abrasive soaps, toners, and masks may make it more difficult to tolerate these prescription medications. Therefore, it's recommended that you cleanse your skin twice a day with a mild, gentle cleanser. Lukewarm water rather than hot water should be used, and fingertips offer a gentler approach than does an abrasive washcloth.

Avoid using over-the-counter acne creams or cleansers during the first few months of acne treatment. This will give your skin time to become accustomed to the prescription medication and for your acne to improve.

Right after showering or washing the face, the skin is very absorbent. Products applied to the skin at that time are absorbed by the skin very easily, and topical acne medications are no exception. If a topical acne cream or gel is applied to freshly washed skin, a surge of medication is absorbed into the skin. Along with this surge of medication comes a potential tidal wave of skin irritation. For this reason, it's good to wait 10 to 15 minutes after washing the face or showering before applying acne medications to the skin.

People with acne often have greasy, oily skin and the thought of using a moisturizer seems absurd. But moisturizers don't have to be greasy or oily. In fact, oil-free moisturizers are easy to find and may help soothe skin with acne that's being treated. Many prescription and over-the-counter acne medications have the potential to cause skin irritation. Regular use of a moisturizer will help reduce this irritation. Moisturizers may be used before or after you apply your topical acne medication. When dealing with acne-prone skin it's important to look for moisturizers that won't clog pores (non-comedogenic, non-acnegenic). Many lightweight, oil-free moisturizers also contain a sunscreen. Sunscreen is an important part of any good, comprehensive skin care program but may be especially important for people being treated for acne. Some of the most commonly prescribed acne medications cause the skin to be more sensitive to the sun.

Since acne is not caused by use of cosmetics, makeup can be used during acne treatment. Look for products that are oil-free and non-comedogenic, and apply the makeup after you apply your topical acne medication. Cosmetics will not lessen the effectiveness of the topical acne medication in any way.

Using Prescription Acne Medications

Prescription acne medications are designed to target the causes of acne. The four leading causes of acne include plugging of the skin pores, greasy skin, bacteria, and inflammation.

Plugging of pores appears to be the earliest event in acne. These plugged pores are visible on the skin as blackheads or whiteheads. Later they may become full of bacteria, which cause inflammation. Inflammation is what causes a pimple to appear red, hot, and swollen and to feel tender.

Your doctor will evaluate the types of pimples you have and will prescribe a treatment plan that targets one or all of the four causes of acne. In general, the more targets that are hit with an acne treatment regimen, the greater the improvement.

Targeting Acne

When your doctor prescribes multiple acne medications, it's not so you can try each one and pick which one you like best for regular use. Instead, it's crucial that you use each product as prescribed to achieve the improvement you want. And even when the skin is clear, it's a good idea to continue using your acne medications until your doctor instructs otherwise. Most people with acne need to continue at least one product long term to maintain clear skin.

There are many products and medications available to treat acne. Talk to your doctor if you have questions regarding your treatment options.

You're in the Driver's Seat

Acne is complicated and the tubes and bottles of prescribed medications can be overwhelming and confusing at first. Understanding why these medications work and how to use them effectively at home is the key to clear skin. Remember, even the fastest car will take you nowhere if you don't know how to drive. Likewise, even the best acne medications won't improve your acne if you don't use them properly.


Take some time to learn how to use your prescription acne medications effectively while minimizing side effects. This will help ensure you achieve the clear skin that both you and your doctor are striving for.

The author, Julie C. Harper, MD, is a practicing dermatologist and assistant professor of dermatology at the University of Alabama-Birmingham.



Peer Pressure:

It's Not Always Bad!



How many times have you heard, “If your friends jumped off a bridge, would you jump too?” It’s true: Following the crowd blindly could lead you to trouble. But sometimes peer pressure can be beneficial. Here’s how to distinguish the good from the bad.

Teens are often told not to give in to peer pressure. That’s because we typically think of peer pressure as “bad”—such as feeling pressured to smoke or drink or engage in other risky behavior.

But in reality, peer pressure isn’t always awful. In fact, sometimes it’s crucial for proper social development. If you didn’t learn to “follow the crowd,” you wouldn’t know how to behave in a civilized world.

So when is it wise to go along with your peers, and when is it stupid? It takes some thought on your part, since you don’t want to just follow the crowd blindly—that would be like jumping off a bridge.

Sorting It Out

Dealing well with peer pressure requires two things: You have to have great character, so you can recognize the difference between good and bad. And you have to develop self-confidence, so you can take a stand.

One way of looking at peer pressure is this: When peer pressure is good, you’re a member of the crowd. When it’s bad, you’re part of a mob.

Peer Pressure That’s Good

If peer pressure tells you to act in a generally appropriate way, that’s good. For example, you probably see good peer pressure when taking a test. Think about it: Testing situations could get chaotic because of the mix of kids involved—some excel, some do poorly, some couldn’t care less, and some are very anxious. Despite these differences, most testing situations run smoothly. Why? Because kids rarely want to be the one to break the accepted rules of being quiet and “eyes on your own paper.” They don’t want others to get annoyed with them.

Even kids who don’t care about the test or who finish early tend to obey the rules. This is “good” peer pressure at work! No one wants to deal with the wrath of those students who don’t want to be disrupted.

When Is Peer Pressure Bad?

If any of the following conditions exist, you’re in the midst of peer pressure that’s definitely bad:

- You’re pressured to do something without questioning why.
- You’re pressured to do something you know is wrong.
- You’re pressured to do something you feel uncomfortable doing.

Be True to Yourself!

Okay, so what should you do if you’re confronted with bad peer pressure? Here’s when that time-tested advice comes in: *Don’t just blindly follow the crowd.*

Instead, follow your conscience. Sort out what’s right from wrong, and follow your inner guide. Remember: It’s cool to let your conscience be your guide!

Acne Facts... and Fictions¹

Despite everything we know about acne, there are still a lot of popular misconceptions about what causes it and how to treat it. Here are some important facts you should know.

Myth Acne is caused by diet

Reality

No foods cause acne. Some foods, like those with high iodine content (like shellfish), may aggravate existing acne in some people, but won't cause it.

Myth Acne is caused by dirt

Reality

Hygiene does not affect acne. Moreover, aggressive cleansing of the skin may actually make acne worse. However, washing your skin gently and regularly will help remove excess oil, bacteria, and dead skin.

Myth Acne is contagious

Reality

It's not a virus. You cannot catch acne from – or spread it to – someone else.

Myth Acne is caused by stress

Reality

Too much stress is bad for you, but is unlikely to affect or cause your acne.

Myth Acne is related to sexual activity

Reality

No amount of sex, or lack of it, will have any effect on acne.

Myth Cosmetics worsen acne

Reality

Partially true – while some do, others don't. Check out products labelled "non-acnegenic" and "non-comedogenic," which should not aggravate your acne.

Myth Acne can't be cleared up. You just have to let it run its course.

Reality

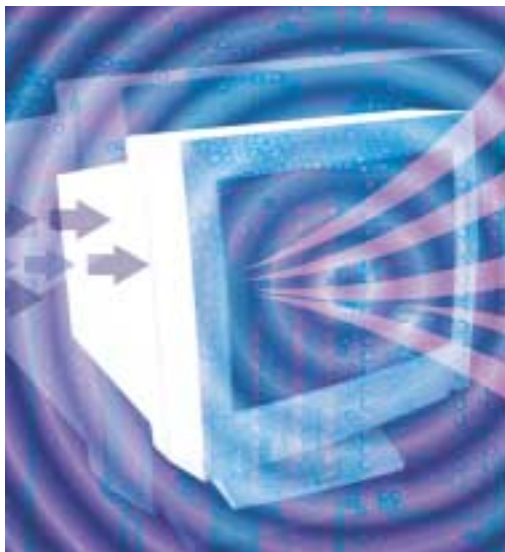
Wrong. Acne *can* be cleared up. If the acne products you have tried haven't worked, your condition can still improve by working closely with your family doctor or dermatologist. With the products and resources available today, you *do not* have to wait for acne to run its course.

Clear Lifestyle

Should You Eat and Run?

There's an old rule that says you should wait 2 hours after eating to run, but is that really important? The truth is, there's no set rule on how long to wait. But you definitely want to give your body time to digest and absorb the nutrients. You also want to stick with a smaller meal before you run—one that includes mostly carbohydrates with a little bit of protein. Some good pre-run choices include:

- One piece of toast with melted cheese and a small glass of juice
- Half a chicken sandwich and a glass of a sports drink
- A half-cup of cottage cheese with fruit and a glass of juice



Some Great Teen Websites

There are a gazillion websites out there for teens—some better than others. Here's a small sampling of sites that are highly recommended by your peers:

- *Teen Advice Online* (www.teenadviceonline.org). This is a cool site, with great graphics and advice covering a full range of relevant topics. Go there!
- *Cyber Isle* (www.cyberisle.org). This gets 2 thumbs up for its excellent articles on various teen issues, and other fine features.
- *Teenagers Guide to the Real World* (www.bygpub.com/books). You can't lose with this one! It's a unique source for adopting strategies to "design your life, control your destiny, understand yourself," and more.

True or False: No Pain, No Gain?

When it comes to exercise, "No pain, no gain" has long been the mantra. But a new study says this is bad advice for most exercisers. You want to feel good rather than bad when you exercise!

In this study, researchers set out to determine the best way to know when a person reaches his or her "exercise threshold"—the optimum level of exercise. They observed college students during exercise and found that students who felt displeasure (rather than pleasure) had crossed the threshold. Once that threshold is crossed, they gradually started to feel worse—and this can lead to eventually getting turned off exercise!

The bottom line: Stick to the intensity that's comfortable for you, rather than trying to match cultural expectations of what exercise should look like or feel like to be effective.



Help for Your Hair

When it comes to hair products, there's no shortage lining the shelves. But what are the right products for your particular hair woes? Here are some common problems and solutions:

- Got fine hair? Then use volumizing products every time you wash and style. These products coat your hair shafts and make your hair look thicker and fuller.
- Bothered by breakage? Strengthen your locks by using a conditioner that's rich in amino acids. Or smooth your frayed edges with products containing silicone. It also helps to get a trim every 4 to 6 weeks.
- Scalp too oily? Here's an eye-opener: You should actually avoid oily-hair shampoos, because they tend to be harsh. Instead, use a shampoo for normal hair once or twice a day. Then follow with a conditioner applied from ends to mid-strands—avoid going near your scalp. Between showers, use baby powder on roots to absorb oil.
- Dealing with dandruff? Well, dandruff can't be cured, but it certainly can be controlled. Wash every other day with a therapeutic shampoo. And remember, your doctor can help. Using a humidifier at night helps keep your scalp moist.



Fab Abs: What Works, What Doesn't

When it comes to getting great abs, forget sit-ups! They work more hip flexors than abdominal muscles, and besides, they can be hard on your back. Instead, stick with crunches (lifting your shoulders a few inches off the floor).

Another tip: You don't need to do a zillion crunches to get strong abs. You wouldn't do 200 curls for your biceps and the same is true for abs. In fact, if you can do 100 crunches, you need to slow down and concentrate on form. Keep it slow and controlled. Contract your abs before you lift your body. And don't cheat by pulling on your head!

Teens Take Note: Another Reason for Not

Smoking!

Young people who smoke may have more depression, anxiety, and poorer physical health than their nonsmoking peers, new research suggests. When college students were tested on various aspects of physical and emotional well-being, smokers (who were all either "light" or "moderate" smokers) scored worse than nonsmokers in the categories of physical functioning, social engagement, and mental well-being.

