


Everything you need to know about natural therapies for acne

Conventional treatment for acne relies mostly on antibiotics. Unfortunately, antibiotic resistance is becoming very prevalent among the bacteria that contribute to acne. Additionally, long-term use of antibiotics permanently alters the intestinal flora, with serious consequences to immunity and metabolism.

When antibiotic lotions and pills don't do the job, women are often offered The Pill. It reduces acne in some, but side effects abound. 

I think the current way medicine treats acne represents a big missed opportunity for imparting healthy information, especially to young people. These "immortals" are undaunted by warnings about cancer and heart disease, but if the link between diet and skin appearance could be better messaged, they would be more likely to adopt healthy behaviors early in life.

Instead, dermatology texts reiterate the faulty conclusion that "it is unclear whether diet has an impact on acne."

Of course it does. It only makes sense.

Acne is not just an infectious disease. It develops when skin pores, whose function is to secrete a surface-lubricating oily substance called sebum, cease to work properly.

It stands to reason that if you consume poor-quality oils—not designed for human consumption—it will cause the oil-secreting pores to malfunction.

In addition, heavy refined carbohydrate intake hurts the skin in two ways: it feeds skin bacteria, and it also promotes overproduction of androgens, especially in women with polycystic ovarian syndrome, a common cause of acne.

Additionally, "modern" foods, to which the body has not properly adapted, are frequent acne triggers. The scientific rationale for this is beautifully explained in paleo diet advocate Loren Cordain's e-book *The Dietary Cure for Acne*.

Following are some natural products I recommend for acne sufferers:

Zinc: Several double-blind, placebo-controlled studies have found zinc more effective than placebo but less effective than antibiotic therapy. I generally recommend 50 mg of oral zinc picolinate. (Make sure it's balanced with 4 mg of elemental copper.)

And if you have to use a topical antibiotic, consider boosting the effectiveness of erythromycin with zinc sulfate. (A compounding pharmacy can make it up with a doctor's prescription, or you can ask your health practitioner to order the medication **Zineryt** for you.)

Vitamin A: Time was when acne sufferers would quaff heroic doses of the retinol form of vitamin A. It worked sometimes, but side effects abound when you take 200,000 or 300,000 IUs of vitamin A: skin redness, cracks in the skin, headaches and liver problems. Besides, too much A can cause birth defects and osteoporosis. Under a doctor's supervision, patients can take moderate doses of vitamin A, but the benefits are modest.

Niacinamide (vitamin B3): Both oral and topical niacinamide enjoy a claim-to-fame in acne treatment. Oral niacinamide in doses of 500 mg three times daily has both anti-inflammatory and antibacterial effects. (Some patients experience nausea at those doses, so be careful.) A 2 percent niacinamide cream can be prescribed as a custom preparation from a compounding pharmacy, or it can be ordered as the prescription med Nicomide.

Vitamin D: Ever notice that a little sun exposure helps your skin clear up? Well, as the saying goes “Sunlight is the best disinfectant!” In addition to the ability of UV rays to zap bacteria, tanning builds up vitamin D levels in the skin, boosting levels of infection-fighting cathelicidin and defensins. Taking oral vitamin D makes sense, too.

Pantotheine and carnitine: According to a protocol popularized by innovative complementary physician Jeffrey Dach, M.D., acne may represent a problem with the skin’s energy metabolism. Dach reports that patients who use “Pantethine 750 mg with 250 mg of L-carnitine three times a day have noted excellent success rates in reducing or eliminating acne. An added advantage is a good cosmetic result with smaller pore size and smoother skin.”

Olive leaf extract: Originally patented by Upjohn as a natural antibiotic, oleuropein from olive leaf has potent anti-acne effects when dosed at 2-3 capsules 3 times daily. Parents of some teenagers with acne order by the case from our Hoffman Center dispensary. Olive leaf soap also has marvelous anti-infective properties. For more on olive leaf extract, see my previous articles.

Manuka oil: Many Hoffman Center patients report healing of blemished skin with application of manuka oil cream. No wonder—manuka oil has documented antibacterial and anti-inflammatory effects.

Tea tree oil: A wonderful natural anti-bacterial, tea tree has great skin-cleansing properties and can be used in a variety of forms.

EVCO: Extra-virgin coconut oil has documented benefits against a wide range of bacteria and fungi, making it ideal for acne and rosacea. Additionally, it has moisturizing effects and a pleasant aroma. But make sure it’s extra-virgin; refined coconut oils are bereft of monolaurin, the active ingredient that imparts its anti-infective properties.

Finally, there’s the SophytoPro Skin Restore System. I searched high and low for a healthy, effective, safe topical product for my patients until I stumbled across SophytoPro; commercial acne products like those you see heavily advertised on TV and in magazines may provide relief from blemishes but their ingredients scare me.

SophytoPro cleanses and disinfects skin with natural ingredients such as Quillaja, pine, black currant, meadowsweet, bilberry, lemon, orange, and willow bark.

Learn more about how the SophytoPro Skin Restore System works for acne in my latest podcast with SophytoPro developer Karen Drake. You can hear part one [here](#), and part two [here](#).