

What To Do About Stubborn Acne

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This question comes from P.L. in Hampton Bays: I have recently been getting more acne and it is very stubborn and resistant to the treatments that I've tried. Any ideas?

Most people know that those familiar yet annoying red and white pimples of acne are largely influenced by hormones.

Hormone levels and their balance influence the production of sebum, the oily skin lubricant. Fluctuating hormone levels cause the sebum to get thicker and clog skin pores, trapping otherwise harmless bacteria and allowing a small local infection to occur known as acne. Treatment can be a bit tricky. The use of long term antibiotics can throw the delicate balance of intestinal micro-organisms out of whack leading to chronic digestive problems and bigger health problems. Topical lotions and creams can dry out the skin causing cracking and allowing the bacteria to track in deeper and can just be uncomfortable to deal with.

Your action plan should include addressing the known nutritional deficiencies that can predispose to acne infections by lowering your immunological resistance. Amino chelated zinc — that is zinc that is attached to an amino acid like zinc gluconate or methionine — vitamin C, vitamin A, probiotics, like acidophilus, and essential fatty acids are helpful in supporting immune function. Eating a diet that is higher in predominantly organic vegetables than animal proteins is helpful in reducing some hormonal stress. Lower fat diets seem to make it easier to get acne under control. Getting more and higher quality sleep — which means going to sleep by 10, not to watch TV — is also important as it will reduce stress levels that can further throw your hormones out of balance. Increasing your water intake, regular exercise and addressing possible underlying food allergies, like we do in the office, are all very helpful in stopping and reversing acne.

Skin inflammation is a common symptom of allergies and if you have recurrent acne it may be worth looking into. Topically a non-petroleum based cream, like lanolin, with tea tree oil and Calendula can be very helpful. Warm Epsom salt water compresses, or yellow clay are better for drawing out the infected material than jabbing a needle into it and possibly spreading the bacteria deeper.

Send in your questions and be well.