

## Acne

If you have acne, diet adjustments, vitamin and mineral supplements, and topical treatment can help lessen the problem and reduce or eliminate your need for drugs.

Before you read further about specific treatments, you should know that in certain areas of the world acne had never or rarely been seen until the people there switched from native foods to a typical Western refined-food diet. Those native foods were whole, natural, unprocessed and unrefined.

"Mainstream" medical treatment for acne generally disregards dietary advice. Mainstream treatments include topical benzyl peroxide, retinoic acid, and topical as well as oral antibiotics. When acne is more severe, birth control pills are sometimes recommended to women for their estrogen effects, and occasionally both oral and injectable synthetic cortisone-like medicines. Lastly, mainstream treatment for severe acne sometimes uses an unnatural, synthetic form of vitamin A which is very effective against acne, but in some cases causes birth defects and growth of excess bone adjacent to vertebrae.

The natural nutritional approach to acne treatment always includes recommendations for diet change. Building on observations of native peoples who had little or no acne, nutrition-oriented health care professionals advise elimination of sugar and refined carbohydrate, and a reduction in saturated fat. Since some doctors suspect a relationship between bowel health and acne, it's also wisest to include as many vegetables as possible in the diet, along with sources of bulk and fiber such as root vegetables, whole grains, seeds and beans.

For a minority of individuals with acne, food allergy detection and elimination can help. Acne that is aggravated by food allergy is more likely in those 25 years of age or older, and in people with a personal or family history of allergy.

Retinoic acid, a naturally occurring, acidic form of vitamin A, is a treatment shared by nutritionally oriented and "mainstream" health care professionals. Although helpful against mild to moderate acne, for some people it causes too much reddening and irritation.

Azelaic acid is a naturally occurring compound available in most natural food stores which helps some people with acne. Some individuals are considerably helped, and some have very little help from it. As it's relatively inexpensive, it's at least worth a try.

Zinc supplements are usually as helpful as antibiotics are for acne. I usually recommend zinc picolinate 30 milligrams three times daily to start, tapered to twice or even once daily for maintenance purposes. Since zinc could possibly lower body copper levels when taken over several months time, I usually recommend copper sebacate (seb-ah-kate) 4 milligrams daily, to be taken at a different time of day than zinc.

Naturally occurring vitamin A has long been used by nutritional and natural practitioners in acne treatment. The quantities sometimes used, up to 300,000 units daily, have definite potential for adverse effects, so these amounts should never be used in self-care, but only if you're working with a health care professional skilled and knowledgeable in nutritional and natural therapies. If you need to find one near you, you might contact the American College of Advancement in Medicine for a referral. I will give you their number in a minute.

When extra vitamin A is taken, it's best to take extra vitamin E also, to prevent overly rapid break down of the vitamin A. I usually recommend 400 to 800 units of vitamin E daily.

Men with acne are frequently helped by selenium supplements, 200 to 300 micrograms (not milligrams) daily. Unfortunately, selenium isn't as helpful for women.

For women with premenstrual or cyclic flares of acne, vitamin B6 is very helpful. I usually recommend 200 to 300 milligrams daily.

Whenever individual vitamins and minerals are taken, it's wisest to "back them up" with a multiple vitamin-mineral supplement.

Some of the people I've worked with have had "colonics" done by naturopathic doctors or other qualified health care professionals. The majority who've had "colonics" have reported noticeable improvement.

Because of differences in age, sex, metabolism, or potential allergy, these diet and supplement therapies may not be suitable for you. Consult a health care professional skilled in nutritional and natural therapies. To locate one near you, you might call the American College of Advancement in Medicine at 800-532-3688 or the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians at 206-323-7610.

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