

ACNE : AN INFORMATION SHEET

An ancient Egyptian remedy for acne featured ostrich egg, olive oil, bile flour and milk

HOMEOPATHY

Acne, like any other symptom is a reflection of an underlying imbalance in the individual's system.

Homeopathic treatment involves resolving the acne by addressing and treating the imbalance.

The most common form is Acne Vulgaris

- Various combinations of red spots, pustules, blackheads and cysts appearing mainly on the face and back.
- Affects up to 85% of those aged between 12 and 24yrs
- More frequent in males but more persistent in females

Involves a complex but poorly understood mechanism involving hormones, bacterial infection and genetic predisposition .

Additional Factors : Diet ; food sensitivities ; overgrowth of yeast organisms, principally candida.

CAUSE ?

Just prior to onset of puberty , in response to the production of male hormones, known as androgens, (in girls as well as boys) sebaceous glands on face, shoulders and chest produce excess sebum.

Dead cells block the sebaceous glands, causing sebum to accumulate beneath the skin, forming plugs, and where opportunistic bacteria proliferate causing the recognisable acne eruptions , inflammation, tenderness and itchiness.

Cleanliness

Acne is not the result of poor hygiene.

Very important to avoid the use of harsh products as these will only cause overproduction of sebum, as it endeavours to protect the skin (its normal role)

Use mild, moisturising products.

Sunlight : can be beneficial in the short term but in the long term may result in further outbreaks.

Constipation

Poor elimination of the bowel is a frequent contributory factor in acne.

Rhubarb root eliminates toxic waste and reduces bacterial inflammation, but it is a laxative so take only for a short time.

DIET

- Avoid sugar, salt, dairy and refined foods. These (with the exception of salt which is linked with increased outbreaks) tend to raise insulin levels in the body which, in turn, is linked to increased levels of male hormones.
- Increase intake of vegetable protein (pulses etc), fruit and vegetables : these have antioxidant properties which reduce inflammation.
- Carrot juice is particularly good as it is high in beta-carotene, a precursor to Vit A which is important for skin health.
- Increase intake of water.

REDUCING INFLAMMATION

- See under diet
- Inflammation may be linked to excessive amounts of omega 6 oils(vegetable oils, margarine) in relation to omega 3 (oily fish such as mackerel, salmon and trout ; walnuts and flaxseeds). So reduce intake of omega 6 sources and increase omega 3 sources.
- Essential fatty acids : sources Evening Primrose oil, blackcurrant oil, borage oil, fish oil (NB not fish liver oil, as these can contain toxins)

HERBS

Oregon grape root can reduce acne eruptions

Burdock combats bacteria and reduces inflammation

Saw palmetto. Trials have shown that this herb inhibits the conversion of the male hormone testosterone to a less desirable form, dihydrotestosterone which is implicated in acne flare ups.

250mg x day

Guggul , an Ayurvedic medicine used for chronic skin complaints (in an American trial performed better than a commonly used antibiotic, Tetracycline, with sufferers reporting less inflammation and fewer relapses)

25mg x day

Calendula : sprinkle few drops of mother tincture on a compress and apply to infected area, 2-3 x daily.

It is advisable to seek specialist advice when considering herbs.

VITAMINS AND SUPPLEMENTS

Vit B5 (Pantothenic acid) . Research papers by D.Lit-Hung-Leung have linked a deficiency with the development of acne. 10 -20mg per day.
Pantothenic acid in the treatment of acne vulgaris and obesity : Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine 1997;12:99-114

Zinc : often deficient around puberty and periods of rapid growth and development.

Acne is associated with zinc deficiency.

Dietary sources : seafood, fish, shellfish, cereals, mushrooms, broccoli, spinach, beans, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, wholemeal bread, egg yolks and meat.

30mg zinc 3 x day for 3-4mths, then reduce dose to 25mg 1x day

Any zinc supplement should be taken in conjunction with copper, as zinc depletes copper from the body.

Vitamins

Vitamin A : important for skin elasticity, healing and resisting infections

B vitamins : very important for general skin health

Vitamin C : fights infection

Vitamin E : skin healing

Probiotics

Acne is linked with increased levels of gut toxins, so a good probiotic and, if possible prebiotic is recommended.

In Conclusion

I would suggest that in addition to homeopathic treatment which addresses the underlying predisposition to develop acne, it would be worth considering supplementing with zinc and a good probiotic, as a minimum.

SOURCES

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