



Your how-to  
holistic guide to  
**treating &  
preventing  
acne**

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# Hey there

## It's great to meet you.

Whether you downloaded this guide for yourself or for a loved one, we're so happy to share all this skincare knowledge with you.

At proactiv, it's our goal to help you get clear and stay clear. While that often starts with a skincare routine, it also happens when you have the knowledge you need to understand what's going on with your skin — so you can take care of your acne head on, armed with every tool you may need.

Treating your acne and keeping breakouts at bay is a marathon, not a sprint. Patience, consistency, and perseverance are the keys to helping you get that consistently clear complexion you've been dreaming of.

We hope you learn a lot about treating your acne. **We're in this together.**

XO,  
the proactiv team



# Acne affecting your emotions is *normal*.

Struggling with acne is frustrating. And emotional. And exhausting. **Trust us, we get it.**

Some people say “Oh, it’s just pimples”. That makes you feel worse, right? Do you ever think to yourself “Why is my acne making me feel so frustrated? So helpless? So sad?” **Those feelings are totally normal.**

In fact, it’s common for people with acne to not want to leave the house, to obsess over their skin, to avoid social situations... if your acne is taking a toll on you emotionally, **you’re not the only one.**

You might not realize it, but the biggest source of frustration for people with breakouts is the feeling that nothing you do helps, or *that there’s no solution.* **The good news? That’s simply not true.**

We’re here to assure you that there is a solution. Clear skin can be in your future. Read on for solutions, and ways to **tackle your acne head on.**



# What causes acne?

There are lots of things that cause breakouts. Here are the main culprits.



## Hormones

Not just for teens, hormones affect adults too



## P. acnes bacteria

This is the type of bacteria that causes breakouts



## Clogged pores

When there's gunk in your pores, pimples are more likely to show up



## Diet

Some high-glycemic foods are linked to breakouts; some individuals have digestive systems and skin that are more sensitive to certain foods



## Genetics

Something you just can't change... thanks mom & dad!



## Medications

Acne can be a side effect of some medications



## Stress

Stress = more hormones, which leads to more oil production, which = more breakouts



## Acne mechanica

This type of acne is caused by friction, heat, pressure on the skin from tight clothing or workout gear, or sweaty skin that isn't exposed to air

# Acne Mythbusters

There's lots of wrong info out there about acne, so rest assured that your breakouts are not caused by:



## **Not drinking enough water**

Being dehydrated isn't good for your overall health but being bad about water intake isn't to blame for your pimples



## **Dirty skin**

Having a "dirty face" doesn't cause breakouts - everyone's skin produces oil and sheds dead skin cells

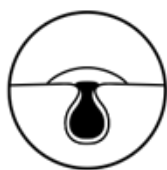


## **Makeup**

The wrong type of products or makeup can make acne worse, but makeup alone won't cause acne unless you're leaving it on your skin for days at a time

# Types of Acne

Trying to figure out exactly what type of breakouts you have? Here's a helpful guide for identifying your acne, which will make finding the right treatments much easier!



## **Blackheads**

These small black dots are clogged pores, filled with oil, debris, and dead skin cells. When this mixture is exposed to the air, it oxidizes and turns black.

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## **Whiteheads**

These small, skin colored bumps are also clogged pores, filled with oil, debris, and dead skin cells. They have a thin layer of skin over them, causing this bump.

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## **Papules/Pustules**

These mild to moderate forms of breakouts are red, inflamed, and often filled with pus. They are clogged pores (aka blackheads and whiteheads) that have been invaded by *P. Acnes* bacteria.

# Acne ghosts: scars vs hyperpigmentation

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When your breakouts are finally gone, do they leave a mark in their place? Here's how to figure out what that mark actually is.



## Scars

If the mark is indented into your skin or it sticks out above the surface, this is called a scar.

## Hyperpigmentation

Often called dark marks or dark spots, hyperpigmentation is often mistaken for scars. These spots occur when your skin produces too much melanin while trying to heal and protect itself.

## Post-inflammatory Erythema

These are the red, pink, sometimes purple-looking spots that appear on lighter skin after a pimple disappears, typically from cystic breakouts.



# How to treat & prevent acne

Here are 8 important ways to treat the breakouts you have and prevent new ones from showing up.



## Follow a regular skincare routine *(with active, acne-treating ingredients)*

This is the number one way to treat your acne, and it's the foundation that proactiv was created on. It's crucial that you cleanse, treat, moisturize, protect — morning and night. And this includes always wearing sunscreen!



## Try to manage your stress

Stress produces cortisol, and cortisol spikes oil production, which can lead to more breakouts. Everyone has a different way to manage their stress, but here are a few suggestions: working out, doing yoga, taking walks, getting regular sleep, journaling, meditating, spending time with loved ones, taking baths, or anything else that helps calm you down.



## Stop picking your pimples

Easier said than done, we know, but do everything you can to keep your hands off of your face. The more you pick, the more irritated your face becomes, and the more likely you will leave scars and marks on your skin. Less picking means less scarring and hyperpigmentation! Plus, you may spread acne-causing bacteria, which will lead to even more breakouts.

# How to treat & prevent acne (cont.)



## Change your sheets & towels

Our sheets and towels accumulate all sorts of dirt, oil, debris, and dead skin cells when we sleep on them or wash our face and hands. Be sure to change out your linens regularly to avoid putting that gunk back onto your skin.



## Be aware of what's touching your skin

For some people it's their boyfriend's beard, for other people it's their dirty cell phone or headphones. Aside from your linens, pay attention to what's touching your face and possibly transferring dirt and bacteria onto your skin — or irritating and inflaming your acne.



## Shower after you sweat

Sweat doesn't cause acne, but if you work out a lot and are noticing you have breakouts, make sure you change out of your sweaty clothes and shower ASAP. Skin trapped under sweaty clothes or workout equipment (like helmets or sweatbands) can develop acne mechanica, a specific type of breakout caused by heat and friction.

# How to treat & prevent acne (cont.)



## Regulate your diet

Generally speaking, simple carbohydrates (starchy food like flour, bread, and potatoes and anything with sugar) have high glycemic indexes, which means they cause glucose and insulin levels to spike. This spike can stimulate oil-producing hormones which can lead to breakouts. Skim milk is another food with a higher link to breakouts, which might have to do with the natural growth factors that are often altered during processing and manufacturing. Trying an elimination diet and avoiding carbohydrates could be helpful if you're struggling to clear your skin. Foods with "organic" or "hormone-free" are ideal if your body is sensitive to hormones and additional ingredients.



## Double check your medications

If you're on any prescription meds, ask your doctor if acne is a side effect. Also be sure to review any supplements or other herbal medications you're taking because they may increase acne formation.



# All-star acne fighting ingredients

Your acne-fighting roster should include four active ingredients. Here's what they are and how they work.



## Benzoyl peroxide

A topical antiseptic and exfoliating ingredient, benzoyl peroxide (frequently referred to as BP or BPO) helps kill acne-causing bacteria, increases the turnover of your skin (meaning it helps your skin shed extra dead cells) and removes all of the impurities in your pores.

## Salicylic acid

Known as a beta hydroxy acid, or BHA, salicylic acid is an exfoliating ingredient that's able to get into your skin to loosen and shed all the gunk (like dead skin cells, debris, and oil) that clogs up your pores. It's also an anti-inflammatory, making it great for soothing red, inflamed skin.

## Retinoids

By encouraging the skin to shed dead cells (which are the main cause of clogged pores), retinoids break the acne cycle. Because retinoids work deep within the pores to keep them from clogging, breakouts are stopped in their tracks, before they begin developing. They're also an anti-inflammatory ingredient.

## Sulfur

Like BPO, sulfur helps kill acne-causing bacteria. This acne-fighter also dries up the skin, soaking up excess oil which can clog pores and lead to breakouts. It also dries up dead skin cells, which can also cause pimples.

# Taking care of your skin

## Washing your face 101

- Run the water to be warm, not hot.
- Wet the surface of your skin.
- Using a quarter size dollop, gently massage your cleanser into your skin for 30-60 seconds.
- Gently pat dry with a clean towel – avoid rubbing the skin.

## The importance of (gently) exfoliating

- Exfoliating is the process of removing all the gunk and debris that are clogging your pores. Clogged pores are the building blocks of acne, so getting rid of and preventing clogged pores means stopping breakouts before they happen.
- You can exfoliate with a chemical exfoliator (e.g. salicylic acid, benzoyl peroxide, glycolic acid, etc.) or a physical exfoliator (like a cleansing brush or a cleanser with tiny beads or granules). Both are important for helping to eliminate pore-clogging impurities.
- Exfoliation is also incredibly beneficial for fading post-acne marks.

## Why moisturizing is key

- People often think that if they have oily skin, they don't need a moisturizer. Not true!
- Oil and moisture are two different things. Oily skin can be dry, too!
- When you're treating your acne, ingredients can be very drying, so moisturizing the skin to prevent extra dry skin or flakiness is crucial.
- Keeping your skin moisturized allows it to better tolerate acne treatments.
- Gentle, lightweight moisturizing products can calm down inflammation that makes acne look and feel worse.

# Taking care of your skin (cont.)

## Sunscreen is crucial acne care

- UVA and UVB rays from the sun cause skin damage and make your skin heal more slowly.
- If you have dark marks or scars, the sun's UV rays will also make these worse and prolong the time it takes for them to fade.
- Protect your skin with a broad-spectrum sunscreen that is oil-free and noncomedogenic, meaning it won't clog your pores.

## How to treat an active pimple

**Got a pimple that's driving you crazy? Trying to avoid picking at it? Here's the right way to treat active breakouts.**

- Wash your face using lukewarm water and a gentle cleanser with acne-fighting ingredients.
- Avoid using hot water, or steaming the skin, to minimize redness and swelling. Keep water temperatures cooler when you're washing your face or showering.
- When drying your face, gently pat your skin — avoid rubbing the towel against your skin, since additional friction will irritate your breakouts.
- Use a gentle, lightweight moisturizer to calm the skin.
- An ice cube can be applied to the pimple gently, for about 5 seconds, to decrease redness and minimize the size.
- Avoid using household items to spot treat (such as toothpaste, vinegar, baking soda or alcohol). Instead, use a product specifically designed to treat acne to avoid worsening the spot or causing scars.
- If your pimple is large and painful, consider visiting your board-certified dermatologist to receive a cortisone injection. Cortisone can shrink the pimple rapidly if you're uncomfortable.

# Taking care of your skin (cont.)

## I picked my pimple, now what?

**Temptation got the best of you and you picked your pimple. We're not here to judge. Here's how to deal with the aftermath.**

- Keep the skin clean to prevent infection.
- Use a gentle cleanser twice a day.
- Avoid applying acne medication directly to the picked area until it heals — acne actives might be too irritating on broken skin.
- Avoid sunlight to minimize the marks left behind by picking. Always wear SPF 30 or higher when you do need to be outdoors.
- Use an oil-free moisturizer to help maintain a strong skin barrier, which improves healing.

## Stocking your skincare cabinet & makeup bag

- The key to picking the right products for acne-prone skin is looking for the oil free and noncomedogenic labels. These ensure that your products, whether skincare or makeup, won't clog pores, add extra oil to your skin, or irritate your acne.
- Some moisturizers and foundations include active ingredients, like salicylic acid. This can be a great option for a two-in-one makeup and treatment.
- Make sure you aren't using too many active ingredients at once. If you overload your skin with active products, you might cause more redness and irritation than necessary.



# Taking care of your skin (cont.)

## Getting clear and staying clear

- Cleansing, treating, moisturizing, and protecting your skin every day, morning and night, is the number one key to clear skin.
- Once your breakouts have cleared, continue to stick to your routine. This prevents clogged pores from starting to form. If you stop washing and treating your skin, there's a good chance those pore-clogging skin cells and oils will accumulate all over again.
- A routine helps keep your skin regulated, clear, and stress free.

## Treating your scars and dark spots

- If your skin is showing ghosts of your past breakouts, it's important to add additional products into your routine that help treat these spots and marks.
- Active ingredients like glycolic acid, retinoids, niacinamide, and vitamin C can help fade the appearance of dark marks.





# proactiv skincare systems

# 6



## Proactiv Solution®

Tried and true for  
25 years

The original 3-step system that helps treat acne and prevent new breakouts. It's suitable for all skin types but great for anyone with oily skin and mild to moderate breakouts.



## ProactivMD®

Prescription strength,  
no Rx required

The star of this system is our powerful acne-fighting retinoid, which stops breakouts before they happen. This set helps you cleanse, treat, hydrate, and protect your skin.



## Proactiv+®

Gentler option  
for sensitive skin

Packed with our Smart Target® technology, these products are formulated to dive directly into your pores to kill acne-causing bacteria without stripping your complexion.



## Membership has its perks.

Everyone with a proactiv subscription has access to our member site. It's a portal where our customers can get more info about the products they're using, customize their kit, manage their shipments, and shop a whole catalog of proactiv products (think moisturizers, masks, and more!) at an exclusive discount.