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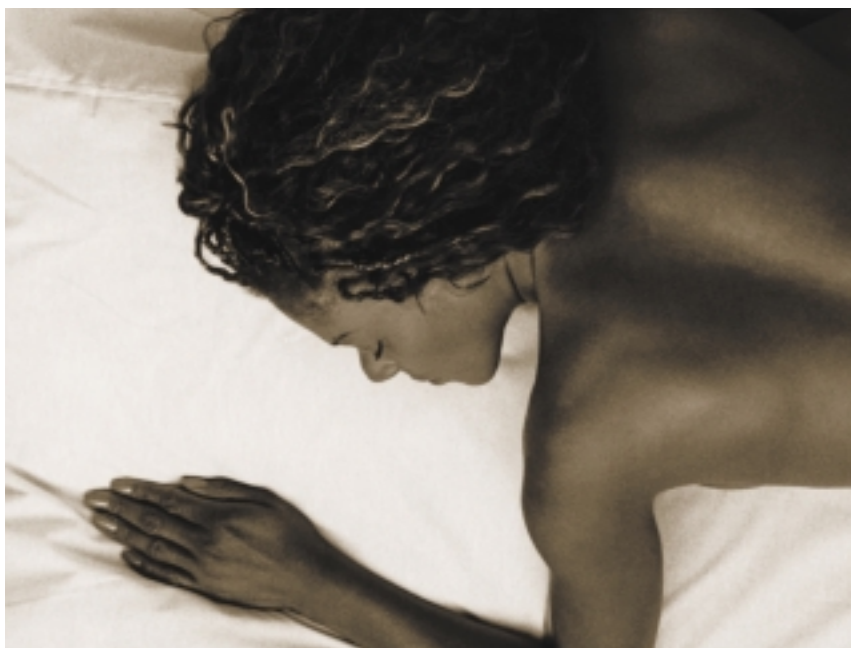
Health Report

SPECIAL REPORT

NO.12



Skin



It's all skin deep

THE EYES ARE THE WINDOWS OF THE SOUL, AS THE SAYING GOES, BUT MAYBE IT SHOULD BE SAID THAT THE SKIN IS. HERE WE TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT ACNE AND SOME OTHER COMMON SKIN CONDITIONS ESPECIALLY PREVALENT IN TEENS.

Acne – act now

Anxiety and anger brought on by severe acne (cystic acne) have recently been recognised. Acne or any other skin condition is not attractive and will affect the emotional development of a person. It makes itself known on the face, neck, shoulders and back. It's normal to feel stared at and vulnerable, and timely treatment from a doctor is extremely important.



What is acne?

Acne is the medical word used to describe anything from the occasional blemish, through to comedones (the technical term for pimples), blackheads, whiteheads, even large cysts and painful swellings. Acne largely afflicts teenagers and occurs when the hormones (androgens) are seeking a new balance during puberty.

Looking for a cause

Acne is caused by a blockage to the opening of the oil glands in the skin. These glands are called sebaceous (sweat) glands and normally provide an oily substance called sebum, which is required to keep the skin healthy. Sometimes there is an inherited abnormality and a tendency for the glands to block. The blockage will

take on a dark pigmentation. This is a blackhead and is visible. The blockage will be invisible at times and the collection of sebum under the skin appears as a small white lump or whitehead.

If the blockage is really tenacious, the build up of sebum can cause the gland to rupture under the skin. This is when you get the inflamed, red appearance, which can often be painful. Sometimes the blockage is deeper again, causing quite large cysts below the skin, which appear as flesh-coloured lumps. This is when scarring and disfigurement are more likely to occur because they heal by damaging the tissues.

The myths

There are many myths surrounding acne. A big one is that it's caused by

junk food, eating chocolate or dirty skin. Acne is a skin disease and should be treated as one. Acne is also not an allergic disease and there is no medical evidence to suggest this.

Most people with acne learn that changing your diet does not get rid of acne and doctors who treat acne have long since learnt that dietary factors have almost no role in the development of acne. Having said that, it's still important to observe a healthy diet. Nevertheless, occasional indiscretions will not cause further acne lesions to develop.

There is another myth that acne is a hormonal disease and that

treatment of hormones will treat acne in every case. There's no doubt that acne is influenced by hormones, but treatment needs to be tailored to the individual by the doctor.

Another old wives' tale is that acne is an infection. It is not infectious and cannot be spread to other people. Picking on sufferers' cleanliness is an example of how people can be cruel to those with acne. Acne is not caused by lack of cleanliness and in fact excessive cleaning and scrubbing can make it worse.

Let the sun shine?

No. There's a belief that sunshine is beneficial in the treatment of acne but dermatologists have confirmed that sunlight and ultraviolet light have no beneficial effect in the treatment of acne. In fact, sunlight and ultraviolet light will cause premature ageing and skin cancer – so should never be recommended as a treatment for acne.

The treatment

People with acne should be assessed early on by competent medical practitioners and in cases of severe acne, dermatologists. There are of course many factors that should be considered, and an acne treatment programme should be tailored for the individual, taking into account the type and the extent of the acne. Some medications can make it worse. For example the overuse of oily cosmetics can aggravate acne. Most widely used treatments are:

- Benzoyl peroxide – this is the simple treatment. It is available over the counter.



David, now 33, suffered severe acne all through puberty. “At the time, I always felt on the outside. Girls would look at me and my face as if I was dirty,” he says.

David now has his own very successful company working in computers. He is the first one to admit, however, that acne is what drove him to computers – to hide. He did not have to talk to anyone. Computers led him to success and eventually a very normal and loving relationship. Acne made him feel alienated and deeply depressed at times. The pressure to be perfect physically during teenage years made it an extremely painful time for David.

“Even though I have pockmarks and scars, the deepest scars are on the inside. I found growing up with bad skin really hard work. I wouldn't wish it on anyone.”

- Scrubs, creams and degreasing agents – also available are soaps and solutions containing salicylic acid that cause gentle peeling.
- Antibiotics – these can be either applied to the skin or, in resistant cases, taken orally.

Severe acne

The pain, disfigurement and emotional distress caused by severe cystic acne should not be underestimated.

A medication known as Isotretinoin (Roaccutane) has been released on the Australian market. It is a form of vitamin A and it has a specific action on the acne cysts. It's taken orally and sufferers have noticed a significant improvement within the first few months of treatment. Victims of severe acne have called it a miracle drug.

In a small percentage of cases a partial re-occurrence has been noted. In Australia, Roaccutane is available as a pharmaceutical benefit under the National Health Scheme but it must be prescribed by a dermatologist. There are always downsides to any cure, although with Roaccutane they



OTHER COMMON SKIN CONDITIONS

Eczema

We still do not know the exact cause of eczema. It accounts for a large proportion of skin disease. Sufferers experience patches of dry red skin, often dotted with tiny blisters. These patches might feel intensely hot and itchy and when scratched the blisters burst to leave an open wound that is prone to infection. Many cases are known as 'atopic', which means there is a family or individual history of allergic disorders. Early treatment is essential.

Contact dermatitis

This is when your skin is inflamed or irritated by an external cause. There are two kinds: irritant and allergic. Some irritants are household detergents, acid, alkalis and over-exposure to water. Some of us are allergic to preservatives, dyes, fragrances, rubber and nickel jewellery. Contact dermatitis is also caused by constantly rubbing an area.

Dandruff

Dandruff can be a horrible experience and socially destructive. As with acne, it's not caused by lack of cleanliness. The secretions from the glands of the scalp dry up, form white flakes and peel away. There are excellent shampoos available over the counter that will control the excess production and flaking off of dead skin.

Sun safe

Australia has UV radiation in abundance and this is the main cause of skin cancer. The bad news is that it is a serious disease and life-threatening. The good news is that the incidence of skin cancer is beginning to fall. Australians are starting to protect their skin. Sunscreen, hats and general sun protection are becoming habitual. This is a very good thing. Sun protection needs to become a ritual from a young age. Of all environmental factors, the sun causes the most damage. Eighty per cent of the signs of premature ageing are because of sun exposure. You should do what you can to prevent further damage from occurring. Before you leave the house in the morning you should apply factor 30 and re-apply every five hours.

are not too severe.

- The skin may become dry and itchy and develop dermatitis.
- The lips may become cracked and sore.
- The eyes and nose may develop irritation and discomfort.

All of these side effects can be controlled by using moisturising creams and other medications recommended



by dermatologists. There are some fantastic products out there on the market, such as Neutrogena, Blistex or good old Sorbolene, try a few to see what works for you.

Facing facts

Unfortunately it seems the more severe cases of acne appear to be inherited, and there are often other family members who suffer from similar severe acne. If one of your parents had acne, chances are you may also get it.

With care and support, early treatment will save low self-esteem and depression developing.

For more information contact:

The Australian College of
Dermatologists
Tel. (02) 9879 6177
Skin and Cancer
Foundation Australia
Tel. (02) 9360 4480

fit&well

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directory of health services

Alcohol & Drug Information Services

Australian Drug Foundation	(03) 9278 8100
Alcoholics Anonymous	
Sydney	(02) 9799 1199
Canberra	(02) 6249 1340
Melbourne	(03) 9429 1833
Adelaide	(08) 8346 4044
Hobart	(03) 6234 8711
Brisbane	(07) 3857 0160
Perth	(08) 9325 3566

Alzheimer's Association

Helpline	Freecall 1800 639 331
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Arthritis Foundation

ACT	(02) 6257 4842
NSW	(02) 9281 1611
Queensland	(07) 3831 4255
South Australia	(08) 8379 5711
Tasmania	(03) 6234 6489
Victoria	(03) 9530 0255
Western Australia	(08) 9388 2199

Asthma Foundation

NSW	(02) 9906 3233
Queensland	(07) 3252 7677
South Australia	(08) 8362 6272
Tasmania	(03) 6223 7725
Victoria	(03) 9326 7088
Western Australia	(08) 9382 1666

Australian Cancer Society

ACT Cancer Society	(02) 6262 2222
NSW Cancer Council	(02) 9334 1900 or 131 120
Cancer Council of NT	(08) 8927 4888
QLD Cancer Fund	(07) 3258 2200
Anti-Cancer Foundation of SA	(08) 8291 4111
Cancer Council of Tasmania	(03) 6233 2030
Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria	(03) 9279 1111
Cancer Foundation of WA	(08) 9381 4515

Diabetes Australia

ACT	(02) 6288 9830
NSW	(02) 9552 9900
Northern Territory	(08) 8927 8488
Queensland	(07) 3846 4600
South Australia	(08) 8234 1977
Tasmania	(03) 6234 5223
Victoria	(03) 9654 8777
Western Australia	(08) 9325 7699

Juvenile Diabetes Foundation of Australia

ACT	(02) 6230 8225
NSW	(02) 9966 0400
Queensland	(07) 3227 1475

South Australia	(08) 8201 7666
Victoria	(03) 9696 3866
Western Australia	(08) 9426 2111

Domestic Violence Assistance

National 24-hour line	1800 811 811
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National Association for Loss and Grief

NSW	(02) 9988 3376
Queensland	(07) 3822 2633
South Australia	(08) 8294 7811
Victoria	(03) 9331 3555
Western Australia	(08) 9321 3553
ACT	(02) 6239 7011

National Heart Foundation

ACT (National Office)	(02) 6282 5744
Sydney	(02) 9219 2444
Newcastle	(02) 4952 4699
Northern Territory	(08) 8981 1966
Brisbane	(07) 3854 1696
Cairns	(07) 4031 5544
Gold Coast	(07) 5592 3039
Rockhampton	(07) 4922 2195
Toowoomba	(07) 4632 3672
Townsville	(07) 4721 4686
South Australia	(08) 8223 3144
Tasmania	(03) 6224 2722
Victoria	(03) 9329 8511
Western Australia	(08) 9388 3343

Poisons Information Centre

131 126

Relations Australia

NSW	(02) 9418 8800
Queensland	(07) 3217 2900
South Australia	(08) 8223 4566
Western Australia	(08) 9470 5108

St John Ambulance Australia

ACT (National Headquarters)	(02) 6295 3777
NSW	(02) 9212 1088
Northern Territory	(08) 8922 6200
Queensland	(07) 3252 3450
South Australia	(08) 8274 0465
Tasmania	(03) 6223 7177
Victoria	(03) 9696 0000
Western Australia	(08) 9334 1222

Sudden Infant Death Association

24-hour help line	
Sydney	(02) 9360 0099
Outside Sydney	1800 651 186

Cetaphil®

Proven gentle skin solutions



Cetaphil® products are proven to be very gentle and effective on the skin.¹⁻⁶ Cetaphil's gentleness means that it is suitable for all skins (from babies to fragile elderly skins).

All Cetaphil® products are:

- Non-irritating
- pH balanced to maintain the skin's natural protective barrier
- Lanolin and fragrance-free
- Ideal for acne-prone skins or for use under make-up (because it does not clog pores)

It's also recommended by Dermatologists for skin conditions such as acne, eczema, nappy rash, rosacea, seborrhoeic dermatitis and sun-damage.

References: 1.A controlled comparison of skin cleansers in photoaged skin. O.H. Mills *et al*, Division of Dermatology, New Brunswick, NJ, Data on file, Galderma Fort Worth. 2.21 day Cumulative Irritancy Study, AMA Laboratories, N.Y. Data on file, Galderma Australia. 3.50 Human subject repeat insult patch test skin irritation/sensitisation evaluation. AMA Laboratories, N.Y. Data on file, Galderma Australia. 4. Comparative irritancy assessment of Cetaphil Gentle Cleansing Bar - a new skin cleanser. Czernielewski J. *et al*. Data on file, Galderma Fort Worth. 5. Evaluation of skin hydration in individuals with mild to moderate dry skin. Herndon J *et al*, University of Texas. Data on File, Galderma Fort Worth. 6.Patient tolerance and preference evaluation of Cetaphil moisturising lotion vs eucerin lotion in atopy patients. Powers J. Data on file, Galderma Fort Worth. Cetaphil® is a registered Trademark of Galderma. Galderma Australia Pty. Ltd. ACN 003 976 930. 9 Rodborough Rd, Frenchs Forest, NSW 2086. McCann Healthcare GALD4567 4/01

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