

why are you breaking out?

Learn to identify what's causing your breakouts, and how to clear them.



story highlights

- More women than ever are experiencing adult acne linked to chronic stress, hormonal changes, lifestyle and environment.
- To keep breakouts under control, focus on managing stress and eating healthy, supplement your skin care routine with the right products, and seek professional advice.

There's no shortage of confusion when it comes to acne, but we're here to help. Our skin health experts break down why most people break out – and how to avoid the most common acne triggers, or at least learn to manage them.



Chronic stress

Acne is one of the first signs of a chronically-stressful lifestyle. Adult acne is particularly common among women, who are twice as likely to suffer from severe stress and anxiety as men. Chronic stress triggers an increase in stress-related hormones, which send skin's sebaceous (oil) glands into overdrive and slow down cell turnover, creating the perfect conditions for acne breakouts. Stressed skin also tends to look tired, uneven, and prematurely-aged.

To reduce the effects of stress on skin, start with deep, slow breathing, which helps decrease tension and anxiety. As you work your way toward a less stressful lifestyle, incorporate preventative measures into your skin care routine such as exfoliation and a weekly masque to help reduce congestion.



Hormonal fluctuations

Research has linked the sebaceous glands to the endocrine system, referring to the former as the “brain of the skin.” Stress plays a significant role when it comes to hormones. When the body produces excessive amounts of hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, adrenal glands produce less progesterone – which is a natural anti-anxiety substance. This hormonal shift can lead to an internal imbalance, which may lead to breakouts.

In addition to reducing chronic stress, it may be helpful to track when you experience breakouts. If you notice a regular pattern, for example, breakouts after menstruation or routinely stressful encounters, talk to a Dermalogica skin therapist about how to adjust your skin care routine accordingly. If pregnancy, menopause or a medical concern arises, talk to your doctor.



Polluted environment

UV rays and seasonal changes can stimulate cell production, sebum and blood flow, and exacerbate acne symptoms. This is especially worse for people who work in areas with high heat and humidity, like kitchens and industrial settings. But you can help protect your skin from UV light and get a lasting matte finish by applying an SPF moisturizer like Oil Free Matte SPF30 every day.



Lifestyle habits

Smoking, under-cleansing, wearing tight or itchy clothing, taking certain medications – all these are lifestyle habits that can affect the severity of one's breakouts. Certain make-up, hair and skin care products can also contain pore-clogging ingredients that can trigger or exacerbate acne. To help keep pores clear, Double Cleanse daily with PreCleanse and Clearing Skin Wash.

Picking or squeezing breakouts at home can do more damage than good. If you pick at a breakout, you risk adding new bacteria to the area and damaging the skin. This could cause even more breakouts and skin-aging inflammation, or a scar. Instead, apply a highly-active breakout clearing product like AGE Bright Spot Fader or Retinol Clearing Oil to the area and wait it out.



Sugar consumption

Eating lots of sugary, refined foods could contribute to breakouts by triggering more oil production in the skin. Stick to whole grains, vegetables and antioxidant-rich foods to help encourage clear skin. You can reduce excess oil with Salicylic Acid and clay-based products like Sebum Clearing Masque.

OK, so what if you've taken measures to curb all of the above and you're still breaking out? See a professional skin therapist for more help finding out what the culprit is and get a personalized product prescription.