



Please note that the information contained in this document is intended as general guidance purposes only.  
For more information visit the Acne Support website: [www.acnesupport.org.uk](http://www.acnesupport.org.uk)

## Guide to Acne Prevention

Whilst the development of acne is largely influenced by your genes, there are steps that you can take that may lower your risk of suffering an acne outbreak.

On this page you will find details of the various preventative measures that are available and how they help to slow down or stop acne. Please note that these measures will not work for everyone. It depends on the type of acne that you have and the underlying factors that are causing your acne as to how effective these measures will be for you.

### Exfoliation

All acne starts with small blockages forming in hair follicles. It is from these blockages, which are too small to be seen with the naked eye, that acne develops into its various forms.

Keeping your hair follicles free from blockages will help to reduce the risk of acne developing. Exfoliating is a way of removing trapped skin cells, oil, cosmetics and other follicle-blocking substances from your skin. It is also a way of removing certain types of acne that have already formed within your hair follicles, such as whiteheads and blackheads.

There are two main types of exfoliation, which are chemical and mechanical, and you can learn more about these on our treatments page. Chemical exfoliators tend to be more effective than mechanical exfoliators. Whichever you use, it is important to continue to exfoliate even when acne lesions are not present. The skin sheds its top layer every twenty-eight days and you are at a higher risk of acne problems occurring if exfoliation has been stopped.

### Skin Cleansing

It is not true that acne occurs because of poor hygiene or the presence of dirt on the skin. All acne starts with small blockages forming in hair follicles. These blockages are mostly formed from dead skin cells and oil travelling up the hair follicle shaft from the skin's sebaceous glands. However, sometimes these blockages can be formed from cosmetic products that have become stuck inside a hair follicle, such as make-up, hair wax or oily moisturisers. These blockages prevent dead skin cells and oil from the sebaceous gland reaching the skin's surface and can result in the onset of acne.

Gently cleansing your skin daily can remove cosmetic products before they make their way down into hair follicles and become stuck. Cleansing your skin will also remove sweat, which can block the opening of hair follicles and lead to blockages forming inside. Using cosmetic products that are labelled non-comedogenic will also help in reducing the risk of clogging your pores.

Do not scrub your skin harshly as this will only damage your skin.

## Avoidance of friction and tight clothing

Sometimes acne can develop because of friction on the skin and the blocking of the skin's pores with tight-fitting clothing and accessories. For example, if you frequently wear a tight-fitting t-shirt the friction of the fabric rubbing against your back can irritate the skin and produce heat, which is likely to produce sweat. The sweat and tight-fitting fabric then block the opening of hair follicles (known as pores) and, along with the heat, create an ideal environment for the growth of bacteria and the formation of acne. This type of acne is known as Acne Mechanica and you can learn more about it in our 'Causes' section under 'Friction'.

To reduce your risk of developing acne mechanica, avoid exposing your skin to prolonged periods of friction and wearing tight-fitting items of clothing and accessories. If you are doing an activity where you are likely to sweat, wear loose, breathable fabrics.

Remember, it's not just tight clothing that can cause acne mechanica. Tight-fitting hats, hairbands and back-pack straps can also result in the onset of the condition.

## Diet

There is currently no strong research-based evidence that connects diet with acne. However, observational and anecdotal evidence does suggest that there may be a link between foods that significantly increase your blood sugar levels (such as carbohydrates, sugars and dairy) and the development of acne.

There is also some concern around the hormones that are present in dairy products and their effect on acne. However, this link is also yet to be proved.

Until further research is done, the best advice to follow is that if you notice that you often suffer an acne outbreak after consuming a certain type of food or drink then to avoid that food or drink in the future. However, always consult your healthcare practitioner before removing any major food groups or sources of nutrients from your diet.

## Stress

Like diet, there is currently no strong research-based evidence that connects stress with acne. However, observational and anecdotal evidence does suggest that there may be a link between stress and the onset of acne. Stress also causes inflammation in the body in general (including the skin), which can worsen the appearance of pre-existing acne. To learn more about how stress and acne are related visit the Causes section of this website.

Finding ways to alleviate stress is good for your general health. There are many techniques that you can try to help you deal with stress, please visit our Skin Support website at [www.skincare.org.uk](http://www.skincare.org.uk) to find out more about these techniques.

It is common for people who are affected by skin conditions, such as acne, to feel distressed. If you think that your acne might be having an effect on your mood and emotional wellbeing, there are options out there that can help you to start feeling better. Please visit the Emotional Support section of this website to find out more.

## Sleep

Getting enough sleep each night is very important for your health. In general, sleep improves your mood, mental health and the body's ability to heal and fight disease. An adult should be getting between seven to eight hours of sleep every night.

If you have problems falling and staying asleep for the recommended seven to eight hours a night then you should speak with your doctor, who will be able to investigate the cause of your issues and suggest treatment options.