

# Patient Education Guide

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## Caring for Acne-Prone Skin

Acne has 4 underlying causes:

- Problems with exfoliation.
- Production of too much oil.
- Proliferation of bacteria on the skin.
- Inflammation.

To achieve the best results from an acne treatment regimen, it is important to use well-formulated skin care products—as well as appropriate prescription medications—that address as many of these causes as possible.



**To improve exfoliation:** Use a combination of an acid that is water-soluble for surface exfoliation (for example, glycolic acid) and an acid that works in an oily environment for exfoliation inside pores (such as salicylic acid or lipohydroxy acid). These ingredients seem to work best when incorporated in soap-free gel cleansers and astringents. Astringents—provided they have a suitable pH and concentration—play an important role in skin care. They permit rapid penetration of the active anti-acne ingredients and are not rinsed off, thus offering long-term benefits. In addition, gentle exfoliation and daily use of sun protection help fade postinflammatory hyperpigmentation.

**To control oil production:** This goal is accomplished chiefly by means of prescription medications, such as hormonal contraceptives or oral isotretinoin.

**To prevent the growth of bacteria:** Unclogging pores and keeping them unclogged helps prevent the proliferation of the bacteria that cause acne. In addition, use 5% benzoyl peroxide lotion at night, followed by application of a soothing oil-free moisturizer. If your skin is not sensitive, you can follow the benzoyl peroxide application with a retinaldehyde-based lotion instead of the basic moisturizer.

**To prevent inflammation:** It is essential to be gentle to your skin. Avoid soaps and soap-based cleansers (as well as cleansers with sodium lauryl sulfate). Avoid harsh exfoliants, scrubs, and exfoliating pads. Do not pick at blemishes, and wear an oil-free moisturizer at night to prevent redness and flaking and to reestablish the skin barrier.

### A Non-Prescription Routine to Help Acne-Prone Skin

AM Routine	PM Routine
1. Glycolic/salicylic acid soap-free cleanser	1. Gentle soap-free cleanser
2. Glycolic/salicylic acid astringent	2. 5% Benzoyl peroxide lotion (use dime-sized amount for whole face)
3. Sun protection factor (SPF) 30 moisturizer with drometrizole trisiloxane	3. 0.05% Retinaldehyde lotion for normal/combination skin

Ms Bertrand is the founder and proprietor of the SkinScience Clinic in Calgary, Alberta (Web site: [www.skincare.com](http://www.skincare.com)). The SkinScience Clinic provides scientifically based treatments for people with a variety of skin conditions.

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## Caring for Acne-Prone Skin

### How to Get the Best Results From Your Prescription Acne Treatment

Patients often interrupt the use of their anti-acne prescription medication because of unwanted side effects, such as redness, flaking, itchiness, dryness, or irritation. However, if the prescribed medications are used correctly and appropriate skin care products are used on a consistent basis, side effects can be kept to a minimum and the treatment outcome optimized.

**The following guidelines have been proven successful in our clinic in patients treating their acne with prescription topical medications, oral contraceptives, and/or oral antibiotics:**

- Use a soap-free, sodium lauryl sulfate-free, hypoallergenic cleanser twice a day.
- Use a daily moisturizer with an SPF of at least 30.
- When using topical retinoids, apply a pea-size amount to the entire face at night on clean, dry skin. Follow with a good moisturizer. If this is done consistently, unwanted side effects usually go away after 3 or 4 weeks.
- When using a compound of benzoyl peroxide + clindamycin, apply one full pump to the entire face at night on clean, dry skin. Follow with a good moisturizer. If this is done consistently, unwanted side effects usually go away after 2 to 3 weeks.
- If your condition requires the use of topical retinoids *and* benzoyl peroxide + clindamycin, use each prescription on alternate nights and always follow with a good moisturizer.

**If you are taking oral isotretinoin, you will benefit from a skin care routine for dry skin, since your natural skin lipids will be diminished during treatment. The following guidelines have been proven successful in our clinic in patients being treated with oral isotretinoin:**

- Use a soap-free, sodium lauryl sulfate-free, hypoallergenic cleanser twice a day.
- Use a hypoallergenic SPF 60 sunscreen as a daily moisturizer; choose one with a creamy, heavier texture. Reapply every 2 hours.
- At night, use a substantial amount of a hypoallergenic face cream for very dry skin (such as a product enriched with shea butter, biolipids, petrolatum, mineral oil, or apricot kernel oil). The rich texture of the cream will provide added comfort and rebuild the skin barrier to minimize flaking, irritation, and redness.
- Care for your lips by using a shea butter-based stick or ointment and reapply frequently. You can expect to apply your lip treatment 30 to 40 times a day.

#### Do's and Don'ts of Caring for Acne-Prone Skin

Do's	Don'ts
• Moisturize your skin	• Do not exfoliate aggressively with mechanical exfoliants
• Protect your skin from the sun	• Do not pick at blemishes
• Use a glycolic/salicylic acid-based cleanser	• Do not use products for dry skin, since these are formulated with oils, butters, and waxes that can worsen acne ( <i>with this exception</i> : products formulated for dry skin can be helpful to patients being treated with isotretinoin)
• Use oil-free, noncomedogenic skin care products and makeup	• Do not use soap on your face
• Be <i>consistent</i> with your skin care routine	• Do not use tanning salons
• Remove makeup before going to bed	• Do not use regular concealer to hide blemishes; use an oil-free concealer designed specifically for acneic skin