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UTM EatWell

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Acne

Acne affects around 85% of people between the ages of 11 and 30. And while everyone wants clear and healthy skin, some of the foods we eat (or don't eat enough of!) may contribute to acne flare-ups.

Many people believe that certain foods like chocolate, nuts, fried/greasy food, milk or cheese cause acne breakouts, however research studies have not proven this to be true. Newer studies are showing potential for identifying what dietary factors can help reduce the inflammatory process responsible for breakouts, redness and pimples, and thus may be helpful in achieving clearer skin.

What to eat to promote better skin

Research points to diet that is high in processed foods and refined carbohydrates as a possible culprit for causing acne. Using the Glycemic Index (GI) to guide food choices may be helpful for alleviating acne. GI is a rating given to foods depending on how they affect the blood sugar. Lower GI foods are better as they digest slowly and reduce the amount of insulin our body releases: lower insulin means reduced cell growth and reduced oil production and therefore less acne.

For the healthiest skin, avoid sweets, candy, pop and fruit juice; and limit refined grains like white rice, white bread, pizza, pastries, and low fibre/sweet cereals.

Instead **choose whole grains (oatmeal, brown rice, quinoa, whole-wheat bread, whole-wheat pasta) and fresh, whole fruits and vegetables more often.**



Image courtesy <http://www.morguefile.com/>

Omega-3 Fats

Omega-3 fats have been shown to reduce inflammatory cytokine production in the body and may keep the body from overproducing skin cells, thus reducing acne breakouts.

Foods that contain the beneficial omega-3 fats include fish, flax seeds, flax oil, walnuts, and tofu. Omega-3 supplements should not exceed 500 mg/day.

Zinc

Zinc is a mineral known to reduce inflammation and kill acne bacteria. Zinc supplementation has shown promising results in reducing acne lesions, however **zinc can be found in a wide variety of foods including meat, poultry, seafood, sesame and pumpkin seeds, wheat germ and oatmeal.** Supplements of zinc should not exceed 40 mg/day.

Antioxidants

Antioxidants can also reduce the inflammatory response in the body, and people with acne are often found to have lower levels of antioxidants such as vitamin A, vitamin E and selenium in their skin.

A diet containing lots of vegetables and fruits, herbs and spices, whole-grains and vegetable-based proteins (lentils, beans, tofu) provides antioxidants that can lead to clearer skin.

Alcohol

Although there are no studies showing a direct link between alcohol consumption and acne breakouts, drinking alcohol can *contribute* to breakouts if your drinks contain a lot of sugar (e.g. using pop as a mix) or if you drink to the point of getting drunk and forget to wash the dirt and/or makeup off your face before bed. Alcohol also affects hormone levels which can play a part in acne development. **If you want healthy skin limit or avoid alcohol intake.**

Cooking oats on the stovetop takes about five minutes, and is a ridiculously inexpensive and super-healthy breakfast!

Just combine roughly equal parts oats and liquid (milk or water) in a pot and stir for about five minutes over medium heat, until the desired consistency is achieved (add a bit more liquid if needed). Top with berries, a sliced banana or chopped ripe pear to sweeten naturally.

Image courtesy <http://www.morguefile.com/>



Need some professional help?

The Health & Counselling Centre at UTM (Davis Building, Room 1123) has a **Registered Dietitian** who can assess your diet and help you make changes.

Call (905) 828-5255 to make an appointment.