

Are You a Teen in Need of Some Skin Care Tips?

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Is your face dry, oily, normal, or a combination? Maybe you've had an experience like 15-year-old "Cristina" (not her real name). She used a popular lotion on her skin for weeks before realizing that it clogged her facial pores, causing a full acne outbreak. She was relieved to learn how to clean her skin effectively and now uses a moisturizer for her dry skin that does not trigger

What's Your Skin Type?

Before you can care for your skin and keep it healthy, you need to identify your skin type. The four main types of skin are normal, dry, oily, and combination. Let's take a look at each on the following slides.

1. Normal Skin Care

Normal skin has an even, smooth skin tone, soft texture, and no visible blemishes, red spots, or flaky patches. Pores are barely visible, and the skin surface is neither greasy nor dry. Normal skin has few imperfections because of the balanced amount of water and oil and good blood circulation.

If your skin is normal, wash your face two to three times each day with mild cleanser or plain soap and water to remove dirt and sweat.

2. Dry Skin Care

Dry skin is dull, rough, scaly, and itchy, with almost invisible pores. Dry skin is usually caused by an abnormal shedding of cells from the skin's outer layer. In normal situations, lubrication from the body's natural oils helps to prevent water loss from the skin.

If you have dry skin, wash your face daily with a mild cleanser. This will help prevent your skin from becoming drier. Moisturize with a non-perfumed, non-alcohol-containing lotion after washing. Also, limit very hot showers, high temperatures, and low humidity, which rob your skin of moisture. Even using soap and excessive washing or scrubbing of the skin increases dryness. Many teens have drier skin during the winter months, when humidity is low and heaters force hot, dry air into enclosed rooms. If your skin is very dry, take a warm bath for about 20 minutes. Avoid using soap or other drying products. When you get out of the tub, pat your body dry, then rub mineral oil (found at most supermarkets and drugstores) or a non-perfumed, non-alcohol containing lotion all over your skin. Pat your skin dry again. The oil or lotion helps to lock in healing moisture, keeping skin supple and soft.

3. Oily Skin Care

Oily skin is acne-prone skin with open pores, a shiny complexion, blackheads, and pimples. Because hormones affect oil production, anything that affects your hormone levels may influence your skin. Some experts believe that stress, such as from exams, may trigger outbreaks of acne. Many teens know that acne in itself creates added stress!

To keep oily skin clean, wash your face a three times a day with plain soap and water. If you need to cleanse your face at school, use an over-the-counter cleansing pad that helps dissolve oil and removes excess dirt from the skin surface. If you have pimples, never pop or squeeze them, which can spread the inflammation and worsen acne.

Use cosmetics and other facial products that are "noncomedogenic," meaning they do not clog pores. Keep your hair off your face, and wash your hair daily to reduce oil.

4. Normal/Combination Skin Care

With normal/combination skin, you might have an oily "T-Zone" (forehead, nose, and chin) and dry skin elsewhere. The pores on your face are large, and the skin tends to have blackheads.

Normal/combination skin can be either overly dry or excessively oily, while cheeks may appear rough. Depending on the time of year, the oiliness and dryness can change, too. The skin is usually drier when the weather is cold.

If you have normal/combination skin, wash your face two or three times a day with plain soap and water to remove the excess oil. Moisturize dry areas, but not oily areas.

Best Practices

Here are four simple steps to keep your teenage skin clean and healthy.

1. Cleanse

It's important to cleanse your skin daily to remove dirt, oil, and dead skin flakes. Washing your skin also rids the skin of excess oil, which can prevent acne. If you have oily or normal/combination skin, use a daily cleanser that contains salicylic acid. This ingredient is used in many popular "acne washes" such as the Neutrogena products. Salicylic acid controls oil production and increases hydration. A cleanser containing glycolic acid can help rid skin of dead cells. It's useful for teens who can't tolerate prescription retinoid creams (like Retin-A and Renova). Read the label to see if your cleanser contains these ingredients. To remove eye makeup, especially waterproof mascara, there are products specifically formulated for the eye area. But some gentle facial cleansers can effectively remove eye and facial makeup, as well as cleanse the skin. Choose products that are fragrance-free to avoid irritating the eye area.

2. Hydrate/Moisturize

When you hydrate your skin, you simply add water, such as when washing your face or taking a bath. To moisturize your skin, you add water, oil, or both.

For most skin types, you should moisturize skin morning and evening, using a moisturizer that does not aggravate a skin problem.

For instance, never put heavy cream on oily skin that is prone to breakouts. For oily skin, the moisturizer should be oil-free, but have hydrating qualities. Always apply moisturizers after cleansing and hydrating your skin.

3. Treat

Many teens need to treat skin conditions such as acne, which occurs when pores on the surface of the skin become clogged. This happens when oil glands produce too much oil, and pores get blocked with dirt, bacteria, and debris. Sometimes, moisturizers and greasy cosmetics contribute to the development of acne. Oils or dyes in hair products can worsen acne by blocking pores. While soaps and astringents remove oil from the skin, they don't alter the oil production. Scrubbing the skin sometimes causes irritation, which triggers acne instead of resolving it. Skin products containing benzoyl peroxide may help to treat mild acne if you use sparingly (once daily in the evening) on oily areas of the face -- forehead, chin, nose, and cheeks -- not just where you notice pimples. Some of these products can cause the skin to become too dry if overused. If you feel stinging or burning, rinse your skin with mild soap and water. Try the topical benzoyl peroxide again the next day. Be aware that you must use benzoyl peroxide daily for at least a month before you'll see the full effect. You have to be a bit patient.

4. Protect

After cleansing your skin, protect it daily from the sun and other environmental factors. Use a moisturizer or foundation with a sunscreen of SPF of 15 or higher (depending on your skin pigmentation or color).

Wearing sunscreen daily and avoiding the sun's peak ultraviolet rays (from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. daily) may provide some protection against premature aging and skin cancer.

Why Moisturize Skin?

Water is an essential part of healthy skin. Normally, hydration moves from the inside of the skin to the outer layer. When skin lacks hydration, it becomes dry and flaky. Without adequate moisture, skin looks dry and dull. During winter, the icy outdoor air and blasts of heat from the furnace make things worse. You can compensate for these "moisture robbers" by using over-the-counter moisturizers.

A moisturizer is a product that functions to increase the water content of the skin's top layer. Choose a moisturizer that includes a broad-spectrum sunscreen to help protect your skin from the sun's rays. If you have sensitive skin, avoid moisturizers with added fragrance.

When Should I Call a Doctor About My Skin?

No matter what your skin type, if you are unsure how to treat acne or other skin problems, talk to your primary health-care provider or a dermatologist. Treating your skin properly each day is the key to avoiding more serious skin problems.

- Acne - Clear Skin
- Growth and Development, 15 to 18
- Physical Activity for Teens
- Helping Your Teen With Acne
- Teen Girls: Mean Girls, Cyberbullying, Dating, Periods & More

- Teen Boys: Sports, Gym and Locker Room Gross-Outs