


Natural Cure

The Natural Way To Get
Rid Of Your Acme

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Introduction

Whether or not you suffered from acne yourself (and suffered is very definitely the right word), I am certain that you are familiar with the condition. In fact, as some experts suggest that 80% of teenagers suffer from acne, it would be impossible not to be slightly familiar with the condition, even if you are one of the fortunate few that did not suffer acne yourself.

As there are for any medical condition that can scar and disfigure (both physically and mentally), there are lots of acne treatments and medicines on the market that are claimed to be 'the cure'.

Unfortunately, while some treatments are certainly capable of alleviating and offsetting the worst effects of the condition, there is no one 'cure' for acne, simply because there is no one single root cause.

Indeed, there are even several different forms of acne, although some would consider them all to be different stages of the same condition. Nevertheless, the point is that with such a range of different acne 'types', the chances of there being one cure-all are extremely remote.

Not everything is bad news, however.

There are certainly things that can be done and changes that can be made that will help reduce the severity of your acne if you are a sufferer.

While it would not be fair to suggest that doing these things will definitely get rid of your problem permanent basis, they will definitely help, and that is undoubtedly going to be a step in the right direction for any acne sufferer.

The best thing is that many of the things that you can do and the steps that you can take to reduce the severity of your acne are entirely natural and do not involve the use of invasive pharmaceuticals or drugs, although creams, lotions and other medicines that are prescribed by your medical attendant are also a help.

Let us begin our investigation into how you can best treat your acne problem in a natural way by looking at the importance of your body's single largest organ – the skin.

What your skin does

Your skin is not just the 'case' that stops the rest of your body leaking out!

Indeed, the skin is in fact the largest organ of the human body. Of course, everyone wants their skin to stay looking young and healthy, so the onset of acne can be a terrible shock.

The skin is a complex and highly dynamic 'cover' for your body, one that is literally changing every second of the day as skin cells die, only to be replaced by new ones in a permanently revolving cycle of old life being rejuvenated by new.

Most importantly, your skin reflects your general state of health, and protects you against the invasion of foreign infections and toxins. It also allows the body to pass the toxins that inevitably congregate inside it to be passed to the outside safely and efficiently. So, your skin is definitely worthy of a great deal of care and attention.

However, no matter how much care and attention you lavish upon your skin, it is virtually impossible to entirely prevent the onset of acne if you are predisposed to the condition in some way.

That does not, however, suggest that you are entirely powerless in the fight against this debilitating and harmful medical condition.

Let us begin by looking at the various types or stages of acne that people suffer from, before addressing what they you do about fighting back against it.

The five stages of acne

Acne vulgaris

This is the most common form of acne, can range in severity from mild to relatively serious, and affect people of all ages. It is most commonly seen in teenagers at the time of puberty, when the bodily and hormonal changes that they are going through create imbalances that are the root cause of acne.

However, it is important to distinguish between having a few spots or pimples and acne vulgaris. The former is the kind of thing that will happen to everybody from time to time throughout their lives as result of the general stresses and strains of everyday life, whereas the latter can involve several different types of sores, lesions or skin blemishes:

- Whiteheads – closed and clogged skin pores
- Blackheads – clogged pores that are open to dirt at the skin surface
- Papules – reddened areas that are prominent and raised above the skin surface.
- Pustules – pimples or small bumps on the surface of the skin that generally contain pus.

In more severe cases of acne vulgaris, the sufferer may develop cysts or nodules that are both painful and filled with pus. These are the kind of lesions that most commonly cause life time scarring if not treated with care and attention.

Acne rosacea

This form of acne generally appears as red rashes that form between the pimples and other blemishes that are most common to acne vulgaris sufferers. This particular condition is more commonly seen in men than in women, and can require specialized treatment and care if it becomes too severe.

Acne conglobata

This is a more severe condition than the last one, as it generally occurs as interconnected sores or lesions that are dotted with blackheads, whiteheads, pustules and pimples. Once your acne condition reaches this stage, it will almost certainly need medical attention, because without it, scarring (which can be mild to severe) will inevitably occur.

Acme fulminans

This is very similar in etymology to acne conglobata, except that the onset of acne fulminans is generally very sudden. In this particular scenario, which is again more common in males than females, it is even possible for the muscles and joints of the body to ache at the same time as the acne breaks out.

Generally speaking, medical attention is necessary once the acne reaches this stage, most commonly with the drug Accutane.

This is a very effective drug that is widely used in the treatment of acne, but it does have side effects of which you need to be aware. Pregnant women especially should be extremely careful when taking Accutane (Isotretinoin) which is a naturally occurring Vitamin A derivative that is present in the blood stream.

We will look at Accutane, its effectiveness and side effects in a little more detail later.

Pyroderma faciale

This is a condition that is generally seen in women aged 20 to 40 years old, and can be quite severe. It often involves the presence of painful nodules, sores and pustules that will certainly lead to scarring in the future if not dealt with in the correct fashion. The good news, however, is that this condition will rarely last for more than a year.

What and why?

Acne occurs when the hair follicles of the upper trunk and head become blocked at the same time as producing excess oil from the sebaceous glands.

The blockage is most commonly caused by a combination of dead skin cells that have not been purged from the body efficiently, and dirt. This, combined with the oil, blocks the pore (the hair follicle opening) at the surface of the skin and then bacteria attack the trapped oil mass, forming a mass that eventually results in the pore becoming blocked. This is known as a comedone (a blackhead, which is the most common acne related lesion, is a microcomedone).

If the blockage stays below the skin, it results in a whitehead, while if it erupts onto the surface of the skin, it causes a blackhead.

As most people will know, the most common time in a person's life for acne to attack is in the teens when the onset of puberty leads to an over-production of oils from the sebaceous glands, allied to over-active skin cell production. However, acne can also result from menstruation or the onset of the menopause in woman.

Yet, despite the fact that all teenagers pass through this stage of their life, not all of them will develop acne. One of the primary reasons that acne attacks certain people and not others is believed to be hereditary.

If your parents, or their parents, suffered from acne, then the chances that you will do so too are that much higher, and there is not a great deal that you can do about it. There are however many things that you can do to lessen the adverse effects of acne, and possibly remove the acne problem altogether.

These should definitely be tried before resorting to drugs like Accutane as a final resort, simply because they are natural and have no unpleasant and detrimental side effects.

What is your acne telling you?

Crazy as it may sound, some experts will tell you that your acne is a good thing, and viewed in a certain way or from a particular angle, they may have a point.

Acne is telling you that your body has a hormonal imbalance that needs to be addressed, and that if it is not dealt with, this could lead to other problems that will come back to haunt you later. For example, hormonal imbalance can be the cause of premature hair loss and even prostate problems, the latter of which can be a very serious condition.

Throughout your life, the glands of your body will produce a huge number and range of different hormones, each of which does a specific job within your body. Sometimes this job needs to be done, while at other times it is not so important, and thus the hormones that were produced to action this particular bodily function are not actually required.

They are, in effect, excess hormones that your body produced 'just in case' something should happen that did not in fact take place.

If, on the other hand, the hormones are 'used' or 'spent', they still leave a residue, and that residue needs to be cleared from the body if it is not to become toxic. Under most normal circumstances, the liver is more than capable of dealing with these excess hormones and the residue left behind by those that have been used or spent.

At times when the body is under strain or having to work excessively hard, however, the liver is incapable of dealing effectively with excess and spent hormones, and this is the reason that acne tends to occur at particular times. For example, adolescence is the time when the human body enjoys maximum growth, so the liver is too 'busy' doing other things to deal with the excess hormones being produced, and it is the same for women during their monthly cycle or the menopause.

It is a similar story with the 'bad' fats and oils that most people consume as part of their daily diet (to be discussed in more detail in a later chapter).

At times when the body is most under strain, the liver is simply not capable of processing and metabolizing all of the fats and oils that we eat, and these are a contributory factor in the acne chain of causation.

Of course, if this hormonal imbalance was the sole cause of acne, then everyone would suffer from acne, and as that is clearly is not the case, there must be something else going on as well.

This is where hereditary factors and a poor or imbalanced diet come into the picture. As suggested, if your parents were acne sufferers, there is a significantly higher chance that you will be so as well, and that is unfortunately just a fact of your life that you have to accept.

Remedying the problem of consuming a diet that encourages or helps your acne to thrive is, however, something that you can do plenty about, as you will discover a little later.

Before looking at diet, however, let us look at a few of the most important general acne avoidance tips and suggestions.

Simple acne reduction tips

There are quite a few things that you can do on a daily basis that will help you to avoid or at least reduce the severity of your acne.

Here is a short list of the most common and easily actioned acne reduction suggestions:

- You must use only a chemical free skin cleansing solution, and this is what you must clean your skin with every day. By doing the job correctly in this way, you can effectively prevent new skin lesions and blemishes from being formed in the first place. In fact, cleansing your skin thoroughly but gently in this manner is one of the most effective things you can do to move towards having a healthy, acne free complexion.
- Do everything that you can to avoid either your hands touching or your hair falling onto any acne affected areas of our skin. Both of these carry dirt and oils that can help to clog your pores and encourage the bacteria that causes the acne blemishes to develop and grow.
- Do not scratch or pick at your acne! This will encourage the transfer of dirt and oils into the wounds that you have irritated or opened with your actions, and cause deeper (and often more painful) acne lesions which are far more likely to cause scarring. Do not be tempted to squeeze blackheads or whiteheads that have formed as a result of your acne for exactly the same reasons.
- Change your bedding, especially the pillow covers, every day. There will be a residue of dirt, germs and bacteria left on your pillow and sheets every morning, and if you do not change them, you risk these being passed back onto your skin, blocking your pores in the process.
- Avoid using make-up while suffering from acne. Most commercial make-up is made using lots of waxes and oils, and these will naturally block the pores of your skin, making your acne considerably worse. Furthermore, make-up may contain a chemical substance known as benzoyl peroxide, and this is something that can further irritate your skin (although, curiously enough, it is used in many commercial acne treatments as well). Using make-up when suffering from acne is just asking for trouble, so don't do it.

Changing your diet

One of the first things that you should consider when attempting to reduce or get rid of your acne is your diet, the things that you eat and drink every day.

As the old cliché goes, you really are what you eat, and so if your diet is poor, then you cannot expect to be entirely healthy either. Your acne problem will certainly not be improved by a diet that is centered around the consumption of the wrong foodstuffs and liquids.

Here is a list of dietary considerations that may help to alleviate your acne problems in an entirely natural and healthy manner:

- Drink lots of water: Water is essential for healthy, supple and young looking skin, and has long been known to be one of the most effective treatments for any kind of adverse skin condition. This is partially because of its slightly alkaline nature (pH 7.3) and also the fact that it naturally prevents dehydration which can be a cause of the sebaceous glands over-producing oil and sebum. Basically, your skin needs plenty of water to function most efficiently, and for this reason, most dermatologists and other skin care specialists recommend a minimum water intake of between six and eight glasses every day.
- Cut out the wrong fats: Everyone knows that the average Western diet is far too rich in all the wrong types of fats and oils. With the prevalence of deep fried and 'fast' food, the average diet that the modern teenager consumes is a natural aid to any acne problems that they may suffer.

That is not to say that all fats are necessarily acne-friendly (as we will see) but those that contain trans-fatty acids such as milk and milk products, shortening and margarine certainly are. In addition, artificially hydrogenated vegetable oils (which are what are most commonly used to cook fried and fats food) should be avoided, if possible.

While eating such fats does not necessarily cause acne, there is no doubt that the fats that are contained in such food items as ice cream, cheese, bacon and milk make the skin more prone to problems.

The bottom line is that pimples and skin blemishes are at least partially caused by poor diet and improper hygiene, and consuming a diet that is rich in the wrong kind of fat and sugar is simply asking for trouble!

- Polyunsaturated essential oils: These oils are called essential because that is exactly what they are – necessary for a long and healthy life. The two primary oils that man needs are the Omega-6 and Omega-3 oils, and, while the human body is in theory capable of producing them itself, it is relatively inefficient at doing so.

For this reason, these need to be taken on board through your diet, and, as far as the health of your skin is concerned, it is the Omega-6 essential oils that are most important. Oil rich fish and fish-oil based food supplements like cod liver oil and other fish oils are the richest source of these essential oils.

Even in the case of these essential oils, however, the current Western diet is not ideal, simply because the balance between Omega-6 and the Omega-3 is skewed. Most experts agree that throughout human development, the balance between Omega-6 and 3 was approximately 2:1.

However, the balance in the UK is now closer to 8:1, while in the USA it is 10:1 and in Australia it is closer to 12:1. Experts have no way of knowing at what point such imbalances will become harmful rather than beneficial, but there seems to be little doubt that at some point, that situation will manifest itself.

So, eating a couple of portions of fatty fish like salmon every week will almost certainly help reduce acne related problems, principally because both of the Omega essential oils (present in salmon and other fish) are known to have marked anti-inflammatory qualities.

If that is not possible, a daily dose of cod liver oil would be an effective alternative.

- Raw vegetables: A skin friendly diet is one that emphasizes eating raw or lightly cooked vegetables, especially those of the leafy green variety that are rich in fiber as well as containing essential trace minerals. You should also include complex carbohydrates such as potatoes, pasta, rice and whole-grain bread because these also add additional fiber to your diet, which is important for keeping your system clean and free of accumulated toxins.

Try to eat three healthy meals a day and avoid snacking, as this is inevitably when you will turn to fatty or sugary foods.

Foods that are rich in vitamin A such as broccoli and apricots will help keep acne at bay, as will lean red meat and whole grains, as they are rich in zinc. However, do not overdo the vitamin A,

because, as suggested previously, your body will expel it extremely slowly, and a build up of too much in your body can be harmful as well.

Detoxifying

Like it or not, a fat laden diet is not good for your health in general, and will certainly not help you to deal with your acne problems.

A healthy, balanced diet that is rich in the kind of foods highlighted above (especially raw vegetables) will, however, certainly help you.

When you make the switch, however, be prepared for a few days of 'diet backlash' as your system gets used to the new regimen. You may find that you are noticeably more irritable than usual, and that you suffer bouts of nausea and headaches.

That is your body purging itself of all the toxins and other harmful substances that you have accumulated as a result of your previously poor diet, so, once you have got over the first couple of days, the bad feelings will soon disappear.

However, once your system is cleaned out in this way, and you switch to your new healthier diet, it is not only your acne problems that will decrease dramatically.

You will also find that you have far more energy than you ever had before and a marked improvement in mental clarity, so that you become a more effective and productive individual too.

In addition, eating a diet that is based on raw and lightly cooked vegetables as well as plenty of fish helps to slow the aging process down, and should lead to a marked improvement in the general quality of both your skin and your life!

And doing all of this just needs a simple change of diet – what could be more natural than that?

The vitamin B5 theory

There is no doubt that some vitamins, minerals and dietary supplements can help your fight against acne, although it is unlikely that any are going to enable you to 'cure' it completely!

For example, as mentioned earlier, vitamin A can help your anti-acne fight, and zinc also appears to have a very positive effect.

There are also some theories that acne is a result of a deficiency in vitamin B5, based on the idea that your body needs this to help metabolize the harmful fats in your diet.

The supporters of this theory suggest that in order to metabolize fats properly, your body needs Coenzyme-A, which is also necessary for the synthesis of hormones. Coenzyme-A is created within the body from a combination of cysteine, adenosine triphosphate, and vitamin B5 or pantothenic acid as it is otherwise known.

Of these three, the one that is most commonly lacking is vitamin B5, and from this it follows that your body cannot make enough Coenzyme-A to satisfy all of its requirements.

In this case, the metabolization of fats takes precedence over the synthesis of hormones, and in this way, too many hormones remain unsynthesized. So, there is a need (according to this theory) for additional vitamin B5 to be taken in as a way of redressing the balance.

The problem with this theory is that most proponents recommend extremely high dosages of B5 in order for the plan to be effective, with between 10 and 20 grams a day (note, that is grams, not milligrams) being the most widely recommended dose. There are many reports that, if taken in the dosages suggested, B5 is actually more harmful than beneficial.

For example, several (albeit non-scientific) studies have indicated that excessively large doses of B5 can lead to chronic fatigue, constant headaches and a general inability for the body to heal itself in the normal way.

The proponents of the theory counter-claim that, since B5 is a water soluble vitamin, any unused excess will be secreted by the body, so there is no risk involved. While this is true to a certain extent, the fact is that the doses recommended by the supporters of the B5 theory are just too high for this to happen in reality.

Your body simply does not have the capability of processing such massive amounts of any vitamin that quickly, and so the B5 will

remain in your body long enough to cause the kind of problems that seem to be most commonly associated with it.

Most importantly, it is important to understand that everything that happens inside your body is about maintaining a healthy balance, and that the more balanced your system is, the more healthy you are.

For example, your body needs both calcium and phosphorus to stay healthy, but it needs them in balance with one another. Get the balance wrong, and it is every bit as bad for you as not having them at all.

Too much phosphorus, for example, and your body will start leeching calcium from your skeleton as a way of topping up your calcium store to maintain the correct balance between the two. This will obviously weaken your bones, making them far more susceptible to damage and breakages.

It is a similar story with vitamin B5. If you try to take in excessively high levels of any particular B vitamin, your body will react by attempting to leech all the other B vitamins out of your body to maintain the correct balance.

So, your body 'sucks up' vitamins B3 and B6 from wherever it can find them, for example, and as these are key vitamins for controlling and regulating the levels of energy in your body, hence you get the feeling of being permanently tired. So, it appears that the vitamin B5 theory is simply not correct and that, if anything, taking vitamin B5 in the dosage that are most commonly recommended by the supporters of the theory is likely to be more dangerous than beneficial.

Acne and zinc

I suggested earlier that zinc is effective for countering the worst effects of acne, and that is perfectly true. However, that is not the full story, and there are other considerations that you need to be aware of.

Zinc is extremely important to your body because it plays a critical role in more than 300 enzymatic reactions that take place naturally.

It also is extremely important for the effective functioning of your immune system, because without the correct amounts of zinc in your system, several things can start to go wrong. For instance, your white blood cell count drops dramatically and the production of what are known as T-killer cells falls away drastically as well.

Both of these damage the immune system of your body, seriously reducing your ability to fight disease and sickness. That is why zinc can be used so effectively to reduce the duration and severity of several common sicknesses, including the common cold, as well as acne.

In an ideal world, all of the zinc that you need would be taken in as part of your normal daily diet from such apparently zinc-rich foods as fish, red meat, legumes, egg yolks, soy products and whole grains.

However, modern farming methods have managed to dramatically reduce the amount of zinc that is actually present in most of these things nowadays.

Zinc is a mineral that comes from the ground, and so for zinc to be present in your food, it must have been present in the ground where that food was grown (or, in the case of eggs and meat, in the feed that was given to the hens or the beef cattle).

Modern farming methods (or more correctly, the fact that most land is over-farmed nowadays) mean that this is not the case, so it is less and less likely that you can get all of the zinc that you need to help fight your acne from your daily diet.

However, you should not be discouraged from trying zinc as part of your anti-acne diet, as it is one of the most effective tools against acne, and supplementing your diet with additional zinc is pretty cheap too.

According to the majority of experts, the two types of zinc supplements that seem to be most effective in the battle against acne are Zinc gluconate and Zinc monomethionine (sometimes known as Opti-Zinc).

Of these, most recommend the latter over the former, as it seems to be the most effective form of zinc when it comes to strengthening your immune system in the way that it needs, if it is to help in your fight.

You should also understand that there are such things as zinc inhibitors - other things that you take in that can drastically reduce the effectiveness of the zinc that you do ingest.

For example, zinc and copper will fight against one another in your system for absorption in the gut, and copper almost always wins the fight! So, if there is excess copper in your body, it does not matter how much zinc you take in, it is not going to work.

If you drink tap water that is delivered through copper pipes, then there will be trace elements of copper dumped into your system by every glass of water that you drink. Similarly, birth control pills are often rich in copper as well, so if you are taking them, it is far less likely that zinc is going to help you fight acne, no matter how much you are taking in.

If, therefore, you are supplementing your diet with zinc and seeing no beneficial effects, it may well be that copper is winning the battle between the two minerals inside your body, so you should perhaps test for copper toxicity. The most accurate method for doing this is a 24-hour urine copper level test that can be carried out by your normal medical attendant.

Testing for the levels of copper in your red blood cells may also work, but testing for copper levels in a hair sample is going to be far less reliable, because of the potential for external contamination.

If you can find someone who is skilled in a relatively unknown muscle testing process called applied kinesiology, they should also be capable of testing for excess levels of copper. In fact, this particular method of testing is something that you can learn to apply yourself, with a little practice, so it might be worth finding someone who can help you.

Homeopathic acne treatment

The idea behind all homeopathic medical treatments is that no condition can or should be viewed in isolation, and that curing people of anything is dependent on attacking the root cause of the problem at the source. It is all about treating the whole person, making them completely well in every way, rather than just attacking one medical condition on its own in the way that a normal medical attendant would.

Furthermore, homeopathic treatment methods generally rely on encouraging the body to heal itself, rather than using invasive practices (such as surgery) or aggressive medicines and potions.

Adopting a homeopathic approach to the treatment of acne is therefore an extremely safe and effective treatment option.

For this reason, it is easy to understand why there is growing popularity for homeopathic acne solutions. While this method of attacking acne enjoys variable levels of success – it works for some people, but not for others (usually those who are most severely affected) - this growing popularity is largely based on the fact that there are few or indeed no side effects.

Using homeopathic methods to treat acne is no more likely to generate immediate results than it is for any other medical condition.

Homeopathy is a form of treatment that takes time to work, and there is no getting around that fact.

The advantage of homeopathy, however, is that addresses all medical problems as symptoms rather than causes in themselves, and thus takes into account all aspects of an individual's health and general wellness before coming up with answers. This is as true of homeopathic treatment for acne as it is of any other condition, as acne treatment using homeopathic methods primarily focuses on the root cause of the condition rather than trying to treat the complaint at 'skin level'.

This is the reason why it is likely that a good homeopath may seem concerned about other aspects of your life that are apparently totally unconnected to your acne. They may, for example, ask about whether you suffer from stress as a part of your daily routine, and of course, as we have already established that your family history is an important contributory factor, they will most likely query you about that as well.

They will most probably want to know about your life in general and all about the environment that you work, live or study in, before he decides on the best form of treatment for you.

He may prescribe some form of homeopathic medicine comprised of naturally occurring compounds such as:

- graphite;
- silicea;
- hepar sulfuricum;
- calendula;
- kali bichromicum; or
- sulphur.

One point that you will often see raised by companies that make conventional drugs and medicines is that homeopathic medicines comprised of compounds and elements such as these have generally not been subjected to extensive clinical and scientific testing. And, while this is to a large extent true, it is a fact that certain homeopathic 'cures' do seem to have beneficial effects for many sufferers from acne without any adverse side effects.

Homeopathy addresses acne as an outward sign or a manifestation that there is a deeper problem that needs dealing with. For that reason, you will never hear a homeopath prescribe ointments or creams, because this is only tackling the problem at the most superficial surface level, which is definitely not what homeopathy is all about.

The secret of homeopathy is that it adopts an entirely holistic approach, and views the whole person (the patient) both inside and out when they are seeking a cure or appropriate treatment for any condition that you have. It is all about discovering the root of your problems, rather than scratching at the surface. That is why it is extremely unlikely that a homeopath will treat what is, for you, a debilitating and scarring condition (both mentally and physically) as just another case of a few pimples!

So, taking advantage of the services of a homeopath is a great option for treating your acne, although you should accept that it is not going to be successful in every case. Nevertheless, because homeopathy targets the root cause of your acne, even if it does not cure it completely, it is extremely unlikely to do you any harm, and there is likely to be a complete lack of unpleasant side effects as well.

Ayurveda and acne

Ayurveda is an ancient Indian medical science which focuses on explaining hundreds of different diseases together with their symptoms and solutions based on what is known as Dosha theory.

It also emphasizes the importance in the general 'wellness picture' of making lifestyle changes in response to illnesses and maladies.

Acne is defined as 'Youvana pitikas' in the terminology of Ayurvedic medicine, which literally translates as 'breakouts of youth'. And, while Ayurveda has a theory of why acne happens that is related to the youth of the sufferer, we are far more concerned with the solution or cures that it puts forward, rather than with the reasons that devotees of Ayurveda believe that acne occurs.

The fact is that Ayurvedic medicine suggests that healthy, strong skin not only protects the body, but beautifies it as well, and it is for the purposes of keeping the skin strong and healthy that Ayurveda proposes many solutions for acne. Some of these are herbal, while others are related to specific aspects of diet that are believed to contribute to the conditions that cause acne.

For example, it is believed that a combination of extracts from the following plants will form a highly effective treatment for acne and other conditions that might be associated with it:

- Ikshu (*Saccharum officinarum*);
- Guduchi (*Tinospora cardifolia*);
- Haritaki (*Terminalia Chebula*);
- Lajjalu (Sensitive plant);
- Gokshura (*Tribulus terrestris L*);
- Kumari (Aloe Vera); and
- Amalaki (*Embelica officinalis*).

And, when it comes to dietary considerations, it is believed that the following guidelines should be followed as well:

- Consuming what Ayurveda considers to be 'opposite foods' at the same meal must be avoided. For instance, fish and milk are considered to be 'opposite' foods, as are pork and honey as well as milk and bananas.
- Taking strenuous exercise followed by eating a heavy meal is to be avoided, as is eating heavy foods that might cause indigestion.

- Excessive consumption of sour and salty foods, plus those that are relatively indigestible like radish or sesame is not good for your acne either, according to Ayurveda.

In addition, devotees of Ayurvedic medicine believe that there are additional steps that can be taken to lessen the severity of 'breakouts of youth'. These steps include:

- Regularly massaging the face using herbal oils that contain Aloe Vera and gokshura;
- Creating a face pack containing other beneficial herbs and applying it immediately after every massage.

It is widely claimed by the followers of Ayurveda that applying the regimen of massage followed by a natural herbal face pack for seven days will rid your skin of the pimples, pustules and lesions that are endemic to acne, and also removes dark circles around the eyes.

The final belief of those that follow Ayurveda that you can use to help your acne relies on the fact that they believe that your emotions play a part in your acne problem as well. So, it is recommended that you learn to control your emotions and feelings using both meditation and yoga.

Chinese medicine for acne

Before looking at the specific way that traditional Chinese medicine considers acne, it is probably worth looking in a little more detail at Chinese medicine and the theories behind it.

Doing so will enable you to better understand exactly where the Chinese way of treating acne comes from.

The first thing to understand about traditional Chinese medicine is that it is primarily focused on treating or curing patients with natural herbal medicines and other techniques such as acupuncture.

The theory is that there are two indispensable forces that affect the health and wellness of people, these being the Yin (female) and Yang (male). With reference to these two points of focus, all diseases, sicknesses and maladies are considered to be an external manifestation of an unhealthy imbalance between the two forces.

Therefore, it is the job of a doctor who practices traditional Chinese medicine to restore the necessary balance using medicines that are created from different traditional herbs and plant matter.

Practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine further believe that there are they call the 'six external environmental forces' and that a imbalance between these is what causes most sicknesses and disease, including acne. These six environmental forces are:

- Heat and summer heat;
- Wind;
- Cold;
- Dryness;
- Fire;
- Dampness.

It is suggested that an imbalance between these six forces is what causes acne, and so different herbal remedies are recommended for different types of imbalances.

The herbs that are used in traditional Chinese medicine are then divided into four herb 'groups', each of which is believed to have a specific bodily benefit. The particular benefits of each of these four herb 'groups' are:

- Supplementing the strength, or strengthening the body;
- Consolidating or redistributing qi (vitality or energy) as well as vital liquids such as blood around the body;

- Dispersing or circulating qi and fluids, to relieve the accumulation of heat, cold, or dampness from various bodily organs;
- Purging harmful waste matter from the body to relieve conditions caused by congestion in the body or an excess, and sometimes to eliminate toxins as well.

As far as acne is concerned, Chinese medicine usually considers it to be a result of the environmental force of heat and an excess build up of it inside the body of the acne sufferer.

In other words, it is believed that too much heat in various parts of the body is directly responsible for the outbreak or acne. So, it follows that potions made from herbs that can dissipate what is considered to be an unhealthy build up of internal heat, at the same time as purging toxins from the body, are those that are usually given to acne sufferers.

Building a little further on the notion of acne being caused by heat inside the body, it is suggested by traditional Chinese herbalists that there are two different parts of the body where the heat forms that produce acne. These are:

- Heat within the lungs;
- Heat that builds up in the stomach and large intestine (known as Yang Ming).

It is believed that an excess of heat that is in the lungs pushes the toxins from that area of the body onto the skin surface, and it is build up of surface toxins that eventually causes acne.

Alternatively, the second heat build up is in the stomach and intestine, caused by too much rich, fatty or spicy foods. This again generates toxins that are passed to the skin surface causing acne to break out as a direct result.

Chinese herbal acne 'recipes'

Many traditional Chinese doctors recommend the following three formulas for the acne removal. In all three cases, combine the ingredients together and boil until all of the ingredients have been decocted:

Loquat leaf extract

15g Loquat leaf;
 15g Dried rehmannia root;
 15g Scrophularia root;
 9g Mulberry bark;

9g Scutellaria root;
9g Coptis root;
9g Capejasmine fruit;
9g Red peony root;
9g Moutan bark;
9g Forsythia fruit;
9g Prunella spike;
9g White chrysanthemum flower.

Six drugs with additional ingredients

15g Honeysuckle flower;
15g Dandelion flower;
15g Chinese violet;
15g Chrysanthemum flower;
15g Forsythia fruit;
15g Dried rehmannia root;
9g Scutellaria root;
9g Moutan bark;
9g Tangerine seed;
9g Loquat leaf;
9g Platycodon root;
6g Licorice root.

Tangerines, oranges and safflower

9g Tangerine peel;
9g Pinellia tuber;
9g Poria;
9g Nutgrass flatsedge;
9g Zhejiang fritillaria bulb;
9g Orange kernel;
9g Safflower;
9g Red sage root;
9g Chinese angelica root;
9g Scutellaria root;
9g Forsythia fruit;
9g Loquat leaf;
6g Licorice root.

Garlic, lemons and potatoes

Although some people may find it hard to believe, there are many everyday items of foodstuff that can help with your acne in addition to those that you include in your new healthier diet. For example, one of the best home remedies that you can adapt to combat your acne is fresh garlic. All that needs to be done is to rub it four times a day on the areas of your skin that are most badly affected by your acne. Sure,

it might not make you smell too good, but you are hardly likely to go out in public with garlic essence spread on your face, are you?

However, if you do this each and every day for a couple of weeks, then you are likely to see a significant improvement in the severity of the acne that you are suffering.

In a similar manner, a combination of lemon juice and rose water can be very effective. Mix equal quantities of the two ingredients together and apply the mix to the infected areas. Leave the mix in place for around half an hour, and then simply wash it off using only warm water. Do this a few times a day for two weeks or so and you should start noticing that your acne will die down considerably.

You can try to use lemon juice on its own to attack your acne in a slightly different way. You take the freshly squeezed lemon (or orange) juice and apply it to a cotton pad. Leave it on the affected skin areas for 20-30 minutes and then wash the juice off with warm water.

In all of these examples, the vitamins in the food stuff being applied to the acne affected area are good for your skin. They also dry the skin out, which helps to remove the sebum that is a necessary for the formation of the whiteheads, blackheads and lesions that are the bane of the life of every acne sufferer.

Believe it or not, even the humble potato can help keep your acne problem at bay! Cut a raw potato in half and apply the flat, cut portion onto your skin. The potato is rich in vitamins, and these help to improve the overall condition of your skin. In addition, the alkaline nature of potatoes helps by breaking down the bacteria which have congregated in your pores, thus making it less likely that new acne blemishes will form later.

Herbal remedies to be applied

Not all natural herbal remedies are to be taken internally, although all of the Chinese medicines that we looked at earlier are. Another one that is taken by mouth is one which can help pre-empt the skin inflammation that is most commonly associated with acne. This is made up of equal proportions of herbal extracts taken from sarsaparilla, cleavers, yellow dock and burdock root.

These herbs are thought to be strong blood and lymph cleansing agents, and half a teaspoon of this blend three times every day should have a beneficial effect, especially when it is combined with a healthy diet such as that we looked at in a previous chapter.

Other natural herbal treatments can be used as creams and potions that are applied to the effected areas of the skin as a way of reducing the acne-induced inflammation.

This is a particularly effective tactic when combined with the application of a warm compress to the skin beforehand, as this serves to open the skin pores, which gives the herbal remedy the best chance of working its healing powers on the affected skin area.

We have already suggested that garlic, lemon juice and potatoes applied to the skin can help in reducing the worst effects of acne.

There are a few more commonly used herbal acne remedies, although it should be noted that the effectiveness of using these treatments varies from person to person, and will depend to at least some extent on the severity of the acne that the sufferer has.

The worse the condition is, the more draconian and aggressive the method of treatment adopted is probably going to have to be. Using herbal remedies could never be described as aggressive, and so, while they all merit trying (there is nothing to lose, after all, as there are no side effects), there is no guarantee that they will work in any individual case.

Red clover root can be applied to infected skin areas because it exhibits certain steroidal properties, which means that it is very effective for reducing swelling and inflammation. In a similar fashion, poke root and echinacea are sought after because of their anti-inflammatory characteristics, as are raw papaya and fresh mint.

All of these are effective antidotes to the inflammation and swellings caused by acne.

Other combinations of herbs that can be externally applied to affected areas after the application of a warm compress which are known to work well for some people are:

- ground orange peel in water;
- nutmeg powder with fresh (unboiled) milk;
- ground ginger with milk;
- lemon juice with cinnamon;
- honey and cinnamon;
- boiled neem leaves;
- salt and vinegar; and
- turmeric and vinegar paste.

Herbs like chamomile, bergamot, juniper, dandelion root and witch hazel are all known to possess excellent astringent qualities too.

This means that they can be applied to the skin with a little water in order to thoroughly clean the skin, thereby reducing the surface dirt and toxicity, which then improves the general condition of the sufferers skin in turn.

Herbal 'tea' paste

Combine the following ingredients together into a paste and apply to the infected areas of the skin:

- 2 parts Dandelion Root;
- 2 parts Red Clover;
- 1 part Alfalfa leaf;
- 1 part Echinacea root;
- 1/2 part Capsicum.

It is known to work wonders for some people, so give it a go, because there is nothing to lose by doing so – obviously there are no side-effects – and everything to potentially gain by doing so.

Green tea and acne

Across the world, the consumption of green tea is second only to water, and, over the past few years, the benefits of drinking it have become far more widely known, partially as a direct result of its ever increasing popularity.

Several of the more prominent characteristics of green tea make it an ideal resource in your fight against the worst ravages of your acne.

Originating from China (where the sheer size of the population is one of the reasons for its popularity) green tea is high in antioxidants, and these are famed for their ability to ward off diseases and keep the body's cell structure healthy.

Research has also indicated that antioxidants are an effective protection against cancer as well as being able to reduce the risk of heart disease and strokes. In some cases, they have even been known to reduce the levels of the 'bad' cholesterol blood levels in test subjects.

In the past few years, however, it has become increasingly apparent that the antioxidant qualities of green tea may help to prevent or reduce the severity of acne as well. This may come as no great surprise, as it has long been suspected that placing a cold (or lukewarm) teabag on an acne blemish or lesion can help, by drawing out the toxins from the skin, thus promoting far faster healing times.

However, research into using green tea (from which most of the nutrients have not been removed) currently suggests that it can go much further than sticking a used teabag on your face. This research has indicated that green tea has an inherent ability to reduce swelling, redness and inflammation, fight bacteria and may even prevent excessive hormone activity as well.

This is all very encouraging news for acne sufferers, as these are all present in the most severe cases of acne.

According to the results of tests that were reported to the American Academy of Dermatology, when a lotion is made up of 3% extract of green tea and applied to the skin, the test results were directly comparable to those seen using a commercial acne treatment cream that contained 4% benzoyl peroxide. In these tests (which were conducted using 100 test subjects over a period of twelve weeks) the cream that was made using green tea extract cream was seen to offer exactly the same level of effectiveness as a treatment for acne as benzoyl peroxide, but with far fewer unpleasant side effects.

While the latter is a common constituent of many leading brands of acne treatments, it is also used in the construction of tires and in plastic production as well as being a constituent of many proprietary brands of cosmetics.

However, benzoyl peroxide is also known to be capable of irritating human skin, eyes and the respiratory tracts, and for this reason, it is even on the dangerous substance list of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the USA with a caution against the dangers of prolonged or long term exposure to it.

Of course, there are no such worries using green tea, as it is 100% natural, and has as yet no known side effects whatsoever.

At the moment, it is widely believed that Western medical science is only scratching at the surface of all the medicinal benefits that using green tea might offer.

One thing is for certain, however. If you want to avoid the irritation, the dry skin and unpleasant redness that often accompanies using commercial acne products based on benzoyl peroxide, there is now a safer but equally effective alternative in a cream or lotion made with green tea extract.

Other herbal remedies

Tea Tree Oil

Tea tree oil (which is often also referred to as melaleuca oil) is originally a native of Australia and can be completely clear to lightly gold-tinged in appearance. It is an oil that seems to have many natural acne fighting qualities, and because it is an entirely natural product, it has no nasty side effects either, hence its ever increasing popularity.

Licorice root extract

Licorice root and its extract has been used for medical purposes for thousands of years, with records showing that it may well have been used as far back as the Ancient Romans! While the earliest records indicate that it was usually used to settle upset stomachs (which is still its most common usage) it has nevertheless been shown to possess anti-inflammatory characteristics and qualities as well - hence its effectiveness in treating skin complaints like acne.

Olive leaf extract

In a similar fashion to the licorice root, the story of olive leaves and olive leaf extract as healers has a long history too, in this case being traceable all the way back to the ancient Greeks. Since that time, olive leaf extract has been used in many countries and societies as a medicinal herb, generally to ward off maladies such as coughs, colds, fevers and infections. This is often achieved through the consumption of olive leaf tea, but in addition, olive leaf extract has been used in many different ways to counter skin problems, including acne.

Aloe Vera extract

Aloe Vera extract is a widely used alternative to chemical based commercial acne creams, potions and ointments that has the major advantage of being far gentler and less aggressive, with no side effects. Aloe Vera extract contains some very effective anti-inflammatory agents and it can also help reduce the degree of scarring left by acne related lesions and blemishes.

Strawberry leaves

According to the scriptures of the Ancient Egyptians, they used wetted strawberry leaves applied to the infected areas as a way of treating a broad range of skin afflictions, including acne.

Basil tea

Drinking two or three cups of tea made with basil every day is an effective anti-bacterial agent that kills the germs that are one of the

causes of acne from the inside. This is also effective against other forms of bacteria, so consuming tea infused with basil is always good for general health too.

Sandalwood

Sandalwood has long been recognized for its skin enhancing properties, so applying sandalwood oil to acne affected skin can return it to maximum health and vitality.

Burdock root

Crushed burdock root applied to affected areas of the skin is an effective way of treating many skin complaints, and it seems to be especially effective when used to combat acne.

Accutane

[Accutane](#) is possibly the most effective acne fighting drug on the market, a very potent weapon against any acne that has been failed by other forms of treatment.

It is generally prescribed for moderate to severe cases of acne that have not responded to other treatment, or acne that has been present for several years.

While most other acne-controlling drugs are based on antibiotics, Accutane is based on a natural derivative of vitamin A, which is itself effective against acne, as previously mentioned. Unlike vitamin A, however, the human body is capable of purging Accutane from the bloodstream relatively quickly (nine days is normally the maximum that it takes) and so it does not build up in the same potentially harmful way that vitamin A can.

Accutane is effective at 'curing' around half of the acne sufferers who take it, and these people will normally have to do nothing else as far as dealing with their acne problem is concerned.

However, in the first few weeks of treatment with Accutane, around one in five sufferers will initially see their condition deteriorate a little, while a very small number (around 0.2%) will see their condition get much worse before it begins to get better.

After that, the 'normal' patient needs treatment for around four to six months, while a very small number will need to repeat the treatment course once again after that initial period.

Having said all of this, there are side effects that come with Accutane, and the severity of these depend to a large extent on the dosage being consumed. They are broadly similar to the side effects that would be suffered if there were large amounts of vitamin A in the body, the most serious of which are birth defects suffered by babies from mothers who have taken Accutane during pregnancy.

Taking Accutane at such a time is therefore definitely not recommended.

Other than that, because Accutane works by temporarily drying up the oil producing glands of the skin, most of the most common side-effects are related to 'dryness'. So, for example, dried and chapped lips, dry and itchy skin, a dry nose accompanied by light to moderate nosebleeds, joint and muscle pain and rashes are the most commonly suffered side effects.

However, the severity of side effects are related to the dosage of Accutane being taken and absorbed by the body, so it is normal that, if the side effects become too severe that the dosage be reduced.

It is also pertinent to mention that the side effects of Accutane are usually far less harmful (on a long term basis) or unpleasant than the side effects of long term usage of antibiotic drugs, so Accutane is normally the drug of choice for acne treatment where all other recourses have already failed.

As established, Accutane is a drug that is extracted from a relatively natural source – it is present in the bloodstream of almost all humans in any event – but is not by any stretch of the imagination the only way that you can deal with your acne problems in a natural manner.

Other natural commercial remedies

Not all acne treatment products that are commercially available are based on potentially harmful chemicals like benzoyl peroxide, and, as established when looking at Accutane, some of the most effective drugs available are still based on natural ingredients.

For example, both [Derma Cleanse](#) and [Derma Pure](#) are widely recommended anti-acne products that are highly effective, but nevertheless, they are still based on natural ingredients.

As a general observation, the more severe the outbreak of acne is, the harder it is likely to be to shift it, and therefore, in these circumstances, it may be that some of the natural 'home cure' recipes might be less effective.

This may mean that you need to turn to stronger commercially produced medicines in order to reduce the adverse effects of your acne, particularly if scarring seems likely.

This is something that just has to be accepted, but it does not necessarily mean that you have to turn to highly aggressive chemical based products for relief.

Wherever possible, using products that are based on natural ingredients is always the best recourse (for the treatment of any medical condition, not just acne) because almost invariably, the side effects of using such treatments are limited or non-existent.

With natural ingredient based products, you know in advance what you are getting and what the adverse effects are going to be (which is none).

Using chemical based products, however, you have no real way of knowing what the side effects will be and especially if you are likely to have to use the product in question for any length of time, this should always be a primary consideration.

Conclusion

As you will no doubt understand by now, there are a surprisingly large number of ways that your acne can be treated using natural ingredients and methods, and certainly in cases where the acne condition is relatively mild, many of them are extremely effective.

As suggested several times, it would always be recommended that you should begin treating your acne with the mildest forms of treatment that you can, in the hope that they will be effective, before moving on to some of the more aggressive (and therefore potentially harmful) methods of treatment. In this way, it is to be hoped that you can find a harmless, mild and (above all) natural form of medicating that works for you.

Despite what the major drug and pharmaceutical companies regularly suggest, it is now a pretty well established fact that not all chemically based commercial medical products are tested as thoroughly or extensively as they should be. For this reason, even though the manufacturers claim that they are 100% safe, there is good reason to suspect that the long term effects of using chemical based products may not be as well known as you might think.

After all, it stands to reason that using any drug based on a chemical like benzoyl peroxide that you already know has potentially harmful qualities cannot be a good thing in the long run. When the OSHA proscribes it as potentially toxic if you are exposed to it over the longer term, then it really cannot be a great idea to apply it to your skin every day, despite the fact that it may be an effective antidote to outbreaks of acne.

Using chemical based products does have unpleasant side effects as well, such as extremely dry skin, soreness, redness, irritation and excessive skin exfoliation.

This happens because most chemical treatments work by counteracting the production of oil from the sebaceous glands, thus drying out the skin. This does reduce the severity of acne on the skin, of that there is no doubt, but these side effects can be both unpleasant and painful as well.

For this single reason alone, using natural products as a first option is always going to be the best way to go, and it should only be after all natural ingredient based remedies are tried that you should turn to more aggressive chemical based products.

In a similar way, do not shun or avoid natural remedies based on homeopathy, Ayurveda or Chinese medicine based just because they might seem a little bit weird or strange.

Sure, they might seem a little bit odd or outlandish in the West, but the Chinese and the Indians have been applying these methods and ways of thinking for thousands of years, and the fact that they are two of the most populace countries on the planet might tell you something about the effectiveness of their medical practices!

No matter how strange it might seem to you, all natural forms of treatment are worth trying, because for many people, homeopathy, Chinese medicine, green tea and other such natural remedies do work. So, until you try them and establish for a fact that they do not work for you, do not allow yourself to prejudge the issue.

The bottom line is, using natural treatments for any medical condition is always a better choice than using chemical based products that you truthfully have no real idea about the long term adverse effects of.

Maybe some of the ingredients that I have suggested using are unfamiliar to you. Most of them are, however, available in the vast majority of Western countries, and many of the suppliers can deliver them straight to your door if you cannot find them in your own locality. All you need to do is search for suppliers on the internet using a Google or Yahoo! search, so don't let that minor problem put you off!

So, there are lots of natural acne treatments that you can try, and I would urge you to use each and every one of them, because I am sure that there is something here that will help you to address your own acne problems.

All you have to do is to start treating your acne the natural way today – and I am guessing that you know where the kitchen is, so do it now!