

Clear Solutions

Preteen or 40-plus: Breakouts have a way of getting under our skin at any age.

But how we treat them is decidedly different. We quizzed dermatologists to learn why adult blemishes happen, and the best routine for treating them.

TEXT BY CLAIRE SULLIVAN



HAIRLINE ERUPTIONS

Tiny bumps here may be caused by shampoo and conditioner, so always rinse well. Styling products can also clog pores and trigger spots; shield your skin with one hand when you're spritzing on hairspray. And if you're a hat wearer, make sure you're always sporting a clean one.

T-ZONE TANTRUMS

Feeling overwhelmed? That may manifest in pimples here. "Stress causes cortisol levels to rise, leading to an increase in sebum production—and the most active glands are in this area," says New York City dermatologist Michele Green.

CHEEK BLEMISHES

"Maskne" can happen when you sweat under your mask, don't change it frequently, or wash it with harsh detergents," says New York City dermatologist Orit Markowitz. Use a fragrance-free detergent. Also, wipe down your phone daily.

CHIN BREAKOUTS

"These blemishes tend to be hormonal," says New York City dermatologist Dhaval Bhanusali. Your cycle (or going on or off birth control) can be to blame.



For a spa-level cleanse, pat your freshly washed skin dry with the Resoré Face Towel (\$35, us.resore.com). It's made with treated fibers to prevent bacterial growth, especially common in damp cloths and bathrooms.

1

Start the Day Simply

The best way to beat breakouts is to prevent them. "Stick to mild products, and avoid varying them too often," says New York City dermatologist Julie Russak. Use a gentle wash, such as **EltaMD Foaming Facial Cleanser**, in the morning and after sweating (\$28, eltamd.com). And don't over-cleanse; this means washing with warm (not hot) water no more than three times daily. Otherwise, your body will respond by churning out more oils, since you've stripped the natural ones, Bhanusali says. Then treat any existing pimples (more on this below, in step 2) and moisturize. A lotion with physical SPF is ideal—that form of sun protection is less likely to clog pores than chemical blocks, says Markowitz. Try **Dr. Zenovia Vitamin C Brightening Moisturizer SPF 30** (\$68, drzenovia.com).

2

Treat Existing Spots

When selecting a good blemish treatment, look for these proven active ingredients on the label. Apply a thin layer to the affected area (remember to wash your hands first and make sure the skin is clean). Then let it dry for a minute, and follow with moisturizer.



BENZOYL PEROXIDE

This powerhouse kills bacteria, says Green. But you should use a lower percentage than what's often found in teen options.

La Roche-Posay Effaclar Duo Acne Spot Treatment contains 5.5 percent (\$30, laroche-posay.us). Patch-test it on your hand; if it's irritating, move on.



SALICYLIC ACID

Wield it for blackheads and whiteheads—it's gentler than benzoyl peroxide but penetrates deep into skin to clear out congested areas. **Origins Super Spot Remover Acne Treatment Gel** also contains bacteria-fighting oregano (\$19, origins.com).



TEA-TREE OIL

It's an antimicrobial option for people who can't tolerate stronger actives, says Bhanusali. Roll **French Girl Clear Skin Elixir** onto breakouts, and the blue chamomile oil will tamp down flare-ups (\$22, frenchgirlorganics.com).

3

Restore at Night

After cleansing, reach for retinol to help decrease oil production over time, suggests Russak. **Differin Gel Acne Treatment** is the gold standard for the breakout-prone, and it smooths wrinkles to boot (\$16, walgreens.com). But if you have sensitive skin, try glycolic and lactic acids to gently purge your pores instead; both are found in **CeraVe Acne Control Gel**, which you can apply all over your face (\$18, target.com). Then rehydrate with an oil-free, noncomedogenic gel. Markowitz likes **Neutrogena Hydro Boost Water Gel**, which has hyaluronic acid (\$23, walgreens.com).



Wash your pillowcases weekly: Hair-care products often leave residue, and those oils can seep into your skin—especially if you're a side or stomach sleeper.



TARGETED FIXES

EXTRA AMMO

Take on troublemakers with these innovations.

FOR LURKING BREAKOUTS

Feel something brewing under your skin? The tea-tree oil and salicylic acid in **Renée Rouleau Rapid Response Detox Masque** deflate burgeoning bumps (\$66, reneerouleau.com).

FOR STUBBORN SPOTS

Undetectable **Mario Badescu Drying Patches** infuse lingering pimples with salicylic acid and soothe inflammation with niacinamide. You can wear them all day or overnight (\$17 for 60, mariobadescu.com).

FOR REAL EYESORES

Don't cancel plans; just brush on **Oxygenetix Acne Control Oxygenating Foundation** to conceal imperfections without exacerbating them. The breathable formula contains calming aloe (in 14 shades; \$66, oxygenetix.com).