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This month we are featuring a discussion about acne. Sixty million Americans including 20% of adults and 85% of teenagers have active acne. Unfortunately, only 11% of acne sufferers seek medical help but 25% will have permanent scars which are very difficult to treat.

## In the News...Antibiotic Acne Treatment May Create Other Problems.

A study published in the August 10 issue of the American Journal of Gastroenterology shows an increased risk of a certain type of gastrointestinal disorder in patients treated with a common antibiotic used in the treatment of active acne. While not definitive, this study again points out that long term oral antibiotic use should be undertaken with great caution. For more information, check out the examiner.com article at <http://www.examiner.com/pharmaceuticals-in-national/inflammatory-bowel-disease-linked-to-antibiotic-treatment-for-acne> or the original article at <http://www.nature.com/ajg/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/ajg2010303a.html>

## For Your Information...The Natural Cure For Acne

Are you one of the 60 million American who suffers from acne? Eighty-five percent of teenagers and 20% of adults have active acne. While 25% will have acne bad enough to cause permanent scars, only 1 in 10 seek medical attention to treat their condition. Fortunately there are some changes that you can make to your diet and lifestyle which can effectively treat or improve most types of acne.

But why, you ask, were you one of the unlucky ones to have to deal with acne? The answer is rather complex and not completely answered. Genetics plays a part though we don't exactly know which genes play a role. Hormones play a role, in particular androgens such as estrogen and testosterone, but it's not the amount in the bloodstream but rather the skin's reaction to those hormones that matters. A bacteria normally found in the skin, interestingly named *Propionibacterium acnes*, plays an important role as do the oil glands in the skin. The oil glands empty into hair follicles in the skin. During an acne outbreak, these hair follicles become clogged with the

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skin cells that normally line the hair follicle. The oil glands overproduce oil which feeds the bacterium. The surrounding skin becomes irritated and a zit is formed. This is a very complex interaction and all the interactions have not been completely defined.

While there are many myths about acne and diet, recent research has pointed to two interesting findings. First, acne appears to be exacerbated by a high glycemic index diet. The glycemic index is a measure of the time that sugar in food takes to be absorbed from your belly into your bloodstream. Foods which have a low glycemic index may either have low sugar content or a high complex sugar content so that it takes a long time for the body to break down and absorb the sugar into the blood stream. Low glycemic index foods are those that your mother would promote like fresh fruits and vegetables. Another interesting finding is that skim milk can exacerbate acne, but not other types of milk. While chocolate has been implicated in acne exacerbations, scientific evidence busts this myth. More important is that many chocolates are mixed with sugars which are rapidly absorbed into the blood and therefore have a high glycemic index.

Another important addition to any natural acne treatment is topical and oral vitamins and supplements. Zinc appears to be an important anti-inflammatory compound. It is not stored in your body so you must have a daily intake of zinc. Several studies have shown that oral zinc helps to improve acne outbreaks and can even treat acne which is resistant to the antibiotic erythromycin.

Nicotinamide, or vitamin B3, is a powerful anti-inflammatory and appears to decrease sebum, or oil, production in the skin. When applied to the skin, nicotinamide has been shown to be even better than some antibiotic ointments at treating acne. Considering the significant psychological and physical effects of acne, if you suffer from acne, there is no reason not to treat it. As with any medical condition, talking to your doctor is important to make sure your acne is not a symptom of a more serious condition.

### **For Your Information..Acne Scar Treatments**

Unfortunately, once acne scars are created, they can be very difficult to treat. While there are many treatments available, there is not one that will work in all situations. In some cases, multiple treatments over an extended period can be necessary to obtain optimal results. When treating acne scars, be sure to speak with someone who performs multiple treatments to ensure that you will get your best shot at improving your scars. Realize also that if someone is touting a treatment that will completely repair your scars and give you 100% improved skin, there is no such thing. In general, you can expect a 50% improvement with most treatments for acne scars.

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