

Elle

6 Things I Did to Clear Up My Back Acne—Fast

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From ELLE

I pride myself on taking really good care of my skin, and I usually get compliments on how well the texture of it looks and feels. However, this past spring, meteorite-like clusters of acne spread like wildfire on my back. What's worse: It all started spiraling just weeks before the start of summer a.k.a. the best time to stunt in my favorite off-the-shoulder blouses and sexy date night attire. Skin is in this season-point, blank, and period-and I refused to experience backless dress-FOMO.

I automatically began researching causes, treatments, and the best products to combat my not-so-fabulous flare-up all while trying my hardest not to be insecure or impatient about it. I consulted top dermatologists, estheticians, skin experts, and also became my own guinea pig for products to see what really works. It has been a bumpy road, literally, but I now know how to approach this sketchy skin situation like an OG if it ever happens again. Shall we?

1. Understand what causes bacne.

"Bacne," short for back acne, can be caused by a variety of issues. In my case, it was hard to pinpoint exactly what triggered the initial outbreak, but with my busy lifestyle (rigorous exercising, sweating while waiting underground at steamy NYC subway stops, sometimes-poor diet, always testing new body washes, etc.), I'm sure there was a collision of causes. Research shows that acne on your back is caused for the same reasons it would erupt on your face. "The primary pathogenic factors that cause acne are the same regardless of location-oil and dead skin cells can block the pore and lead to P. acnes bacterial overgrowth and inflammation," Dr. Sejal Shah, founder of SmarterSkin Dermatology explains. "Other contributing factors that can play a role include hormones, diet, pressure or friction on back, skin and hair products that can clog the pore, sweat, and some medications."

Additionally, there are factors that are back-specific such as not changing your sheets as Angela Rosen, Owner of Penelope & The Beauty and DAPHNE Studio points out. "It's natural to sweat during the nighttime but this bacteria gets stuck in the sheets night after night," she says. Another element that Dermatology and Laser Group Founder Dr. Arash Akhavan shared is that "the skin on the back usually has more sebaceous gland activity than other parts of your body." He says, "For most people, due to flexibility issues, it is also the area that is least thoroughly cleansed. When oil, dead skin, sweat, dirt, and other materials sit in pores, they can sometimes harden forming little concretions in the pores."

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2. Exfoliate, exfoliate, exfoliate.

After a few failed attempts (just laying low and wishing for the best being one of them), I decided to proactively consult with professionals to seek out treatments I can try. Experts agree that getting a good back scrub and proper exfoliation can work wonders. "Making sure to exfoliate to increase cell turnover is key," advises NYC-based dermatologist Dr. Michelle Henry. You can also try a full-on back facial such as the 60-minute We Have Your Back treatment that both Penelope & The Beauty Bar and DAPHNE offers. "We cleanse the skin, exfoliate, perform extractions and finish with a soothing and purifying mask," explains Rosen. "I also recommend getting a body polish every quarter. This treatment exfoliates and removes built-up dead skin cells allowing your skin to breathe.

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