

## Anti-Acne Diet

By [Stephanie Tweitto Jacob](#) Mar 10th 2010 3:00PM



Getty Images

It's no secret that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and low in sugars and starches can whittle your waistline, but research now suggests it may also reduce breakouts. Eat the right foods and you could see a 20 percent improvement in your complexion, says [Cheryl Lee Eberting, M.D.](#), a board-certified dermatologist in Alpine, Utah. Which means that while diet can play a role for some, Eberting says it's not a substitute for a proper [skincare](#) regimen or for seeing your dermatologist, who can determine the cause of your [acne](#) and prescribe the proper remedies.

So dial your derm and re-configure your grocery list: Here are the foods researchers believe may help -- and hurt -- your complexion.

### What to Avoid:

#### Milk and Dairy

Several studies have concluded milk may play a role in acne because of the hormones it contains, says Susan C. Taylor, M.D., a dermatologist in Philadelphia and co-author of "[Reader's Digest Guide to Skin Care](#)." They are said to stimulate oil glands, which can lead to pimples; and whole, low-fat and skim versions were all shown to contribute, as were cottage and cream cheeses. Even formulas labeled "free of growth hormones" may contain hormones passed along naturally by the cow.

#### Simple Carbohydrates

We're talking the starchy ones such as white bread, potatoes, and potato chips, all of which have a high glycemic index, meaning they are likely to cause glucose and insulin levels to spike after eating. What does that mean for your skin? The surge stimulates oil-producing hormones called androgens, which can lead to breakouts. Try replacing the processed carbs with [high-protein foods](#) and whole grain breads, pastas and legumes -- which have a [low-glycemic index](#) -- and you may break out less (study participants did).

#### Sugary Snacks and Drinks

The same study found that snacks and drinks like cookies, cakes, fruit juices and sodas, which also cause glucose and [insulin](#) levels to increase, may influence the development and severity of acne. Some sugars can also lead to hyperinsulinemia, says Eberting, a condition where the amount of insulin in your blood is higher than is considered normal, and one that is commonly seen in women who have [polycystic ovary syndrome](#), a hormonal disorder that counts acne as one of its symptoms.

#### Spicy Foods

If you have acne [rosacea](#) -- redness on the cheeks, nose and forehead along with bumps or pimples -- certain foods have been shown to worsen it. "Spicy foods such as Indian foods that are rich in curry, or foods with cayenne or hot peppers, are triggers for rosacea and should be avoided," says Taylor.

### What to Fill Up On:

#### Bilberries

These deep blue berries are one of the best sources of anti-oxidants, which reduce inflammation -- one of the main causes of acne, says Eberting. While bilberries are the gold standard, they can be hard to find. Blueberries are a good and easy-to-find source of antioxidants, says Eberting, though any fruit or vegetable will have some antioxidants. "It goes back to the adage, 'eat your fruits and vegetables and don't eat dessert,'" she says.

#### Nuts

Nuts are a rich plant-based source of [omega 3 fatty acids](#), which are said to reduce [inflammation](#), says Eberting. While there are no studies that link omega 3's and acne, specifically, theoretically they may diminish inflammation around the sebaceous glands -- which translates to shrinking the pink swelling that surrounds a breakout.

#### Fish

Researchers count fish oil's ability to fight inflammation as the main reason it's been proven to decrease the risk of coronary artery disease, says Eberting. That Herculean capability -- attributed to the omega-3 fatty acids in the oil -- also means its chances of helping with acne are good, says Eberting. Fatty fish, such as salmon and herring contain the most omega-3s, but taking a fish oil supplement can also help. Just be sure it's free of PCBs and dioxins, which are the contaminants in low-level fish, says Eberting.