

SOLVING TEENAGE SKIN

My 14-year-old daughter has severe acne. Her doctor has prescribed antibiotics and suggested she goes on the Pill, but I would prefer her not to take medication long-term. She uses products marketed at youngsters with oily skins, but I also feel these are too harsh and contribute to the redness. What are the natural alternatives?

Jill Davies advises:

Acne can be attributed to various factors, including diet and deficiencies, hormone (and liver) imbalances and a genetic disposition to this type of skin problem. I would initially suggest your daughter cleanses her liver, changes her diet and includes hormone-balancing herbs, as well as treating the skin itself. If this doesn't work, then see a herbal practitioner to discuss whether a minor auto-immune condition may be producing the acne. He or she will recommend herbs to support this and look into the possibility of a more complex hormone imbalance.

For dietary and nutritional support, take essential fatty acids (EFAs) Omega 3 and 6, such as Udo's Choice Ultimate Oil Blend (call 0845 257 4520 for details). Drink one to two litres of spring water daily and eat lots of vegetables, seeds and wholegrains. Avoid hormone-fed meats and fish, as the hormones will upset your daughter's skin, especially if some of her problems are hormone related. For hormone balancing, try agnus castus tincture (1:2) at 3mls once daily at breakfast for one to three months. This balances the progesterone/oestrogen ratio; too much oestrogen especially can encourage acne. Alongside this, clear the liver by avoiding coffee, sugar and alcohol as much as possible and take Milk Thistle & Dandelion Formula, a blended mix of 12 herbs designed to clear out the liver, for one month at 1ml daily (available from Herbs Hands Healing Ltd: contact herbshandshealing.co.uk/0870 755 4848 for details).

For a topical skin treatment, pure witchhazel like Witchdoctor (available in most good chemists) helps to calm and astringe the skin as an on-the-spot gel. In terms of cleansing and toning the complexion, avoid all harsh and unnatural products as well as toners that contain alcohol, as these strip the skin of its natural oil balance and therefore cause it to produce more oil than actually necessary. They may also be causing the reddening you mention. Try Weleda Direct (call 0115 944 8200) for excellent and very natural cleansers and toners. I especially rate the almond range, which is very gentle, and the Akne Doron product, which contains astringent, cleansing and soothing herbs as well as the mineral sulphur. As a last resort, try Proactiv Solution by Rodan & Fields, a three-step dermatological cleanse-tone-and-moisturise treatment from the USA (proactivsolution.com), which can be ordered from the UK very easily. It is based on 2.5 per cent peroxide, which isn't natural but isn't harsh either and works on stubborn and severe cases very well.

Finally, I agree with you about avoiding the Pill. It's a very big step for someone so young.

"MY TRAVELLER'S TUMMY WON'T CLEAR UP"

Four weeks ago the last few days of my holiday in Egypt was rather spoiled by traveller's tummy. Since my return to England I've suffered from foul-smelling wind and recurrent bouts of diarrhoea. I'm taking medication from my doctor, but I would like to know if there are any complementary treatments that might help to restore my health?

Harald Gaier advises:

It seems you have infectious diarrhoea. The first thing I should recommend is a 'parasitology stool test' that examines three of your stool samples, which you would have collected on three consecutive days. My guess is that your gut was infected in Egypt with *Giardia lamblia* or a similar organism. Knowing what it is that has taken up residence in your gut allows for a targeted approach to treatment.

If you don't wish to go to the trouble of undergoing stool tests, you could have a naturopathic physician or a medical herbalist prescribe *Berberis vulgaris* tincture (15 ml in water twice daily) continuously for four or five weeks. This has shown significant success in the treatment of acute diarrhoea in a number of controlled clinical studies. It has been found effective against diarrhoeas caused by *Escherichia coli*, *Shigella dysenteriae*, *Salmonella paratyphi B*, *Klebsiella*, *Giardia lamblia*, *Leishmania donovani*, *Vibrio cholerae* and *Entamoeba histolytica*, as well as many other bacteria, fungi, amoebae, rickettsiae and protozoa. Quite apart from its anti-diarrhoeic activity, *Berberis v.* has been shown also to have an immunostimulatory activity.

"HOW CAN I SPEED UP THE HEALING OF MY FRACTURE?"

Three weeks ago I fell down some stairs and broke my ankle in two places. The operation to pin the bones was successful, but I now face several weeks on crutches. Is there anything I can do to facilitate healing and speed up the recovery process?

Dr Caroline Longmore advises:

To speed up healing you need to provide your body with optimal amounts of the nutrients needed for bone repair. Take calcium (1000mg in divided doses such as 500mg morning and night) with magnesium (500mg). Boron is also important as a key trace mineral in the structure of bone, and it is needed for the metabolism of calcium and magnesium – take 3mg a day. Vitamin C is involved in the formation of collagen – the cement in bone – so take 1000mg three times a day. Glucosamine stimulates the production of the

MEET THE PANEL

HARALD GAIER is a naturopathic physician with recognition of equivalence to a medical degree in Austria and has a doctorate in naturopathic and botanical medicine. Harald is registered in the UK as an osteopath, naturopath, acupuncturist, medical herbalist and homeopath. He currently serves on the Education and Training Committee for the Prince of Wales' Foundation for Integrated Health. Contact: 11 Harley Street, London on 020 7612 9800 (mob: 07917662042) or visit drgaier.com



SARAH BOWLES-FLANNERY practised naturopathy in the UK and Australia before co-founding Galen Naturopathic Centre in Richmond, Surrey with Dr Caroline Longmore. Sarah specialises in herbal medicine, nutrition, iridology, food intolerance testing, the menopause, digestion, anxiety, depression, hormonal problems and energy levels.



DR CAROLINE LONGMORE worked as a Paediatric Doctor in Paris and for Medicine Sans Frontières before retraining in naturopathic medicine in the UK. She co-founded Galen Naturopathic Centre in Richmond, Surrey, where she specialises in acupuncture, detox, stress and anti-ageing treatments. Telephone Galen on 020 8332 7711.



JILL DAVIES is a herbal practitioner with over 20 years experience. Based in Norfolk, she is also the co-director of Herbs Hands Healing Ltd – suppliers of medicinal herbal formulae since 1978. Telephone 0845 345 3727 or visit herbshandshealing.co.uk. Jill is a member of the EHPA and vice-chairman of the Association of Master Herbalists (AMH).



substances needed for joint repair. Take 1500mg a day. Fresh pineapple contains bromelain which is an enzyme that acts to reduce swelling and inflammation, so try and include some in your weekly diet. Avoid acid-forming red meat and caffeine as these leach calcium from the bone in order to buffer the increased acid in the blood. Fizzy drinks and foods with preservatives contain high levels of phosphates, which can lead to bone density loss.

The homeopathic remedies *symphytum* and *arnica* in the 30C potencies are also useful. Take one dose of each three times a day for up to three weeks. Stop the *arnica* once your ankle is no longer painful, but continue the *symphytum* once a day for another three weeks, along with *hypericum* 30C three times day if there is pain associated with damage to nerves.

FRESH PINEAPPLE CONTAINS BROMELAIN, WHICH ACTS TO REDUCE SWELLING AND INFLAMMATION