

Basic Skin Care Regimens for Acne

QUESTION

With all of the over-the-counter skin care products available and all of the claims made for them, I find that patients are confused about basic skin care. What basic skin care regimens do you recommend to your patients with acne?

RESPONSE FROM THE EXPERT



Response from Hilary Baldwin, MD

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Basic skin care for patients with acne has 4 basic components:

- What not to do;
- Gentle cleansing;
- Healthy moisturizing; and
- Sun protection.

Acne medications can be drying and somewhat irritating, especially during the initial phases of treatment. Overaggressive washing and exfoliating do not improve acne and can lead to underutilization of potentially effective medications. As such, we recommend avoidance of toners and astringents because they are of dubious importance and are very drying. Scrubs, hydroxy acids, and other types of exfoliants should also be put aside. Chemical peels or microdermabrasions should be done (if at all) only by the prescribing dermatologist.^[1]

Cleansing should be done with a mild soap, water, and fingertips. No washcloths or scrubbing pads or nets should be used. Once at night is generally sufficient.

Moisturizers should be applied after washing and again whenever the skin feels dry. Care should be taken to purchase moisturizers that have been tested and found to be "non-acnegenic" (doesn't cause acne) and "non-comedogenic" (doesn't cause blackheads).^[2] Thicker moisturizers may be necessary in the early phases of treatment.

Sun protection is always important, but particularly when using topical retinoids and certain types of oral antibiotics.^[3,4] Both drug types can increase sun sensitivity.