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BEAUTY

How to not let body acne get in the way of your backless party dress plans

BY APARRNA GUPTA

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We asked two skincare experts on the best ways to prevent and treat those pesky spots



Acne is, and will always be annoying. But its more annoying cousin, body acne—of the butt and back kinds, can be harder to fight. But the holiday season brings with it weddings, parties, backless blouses and dresses, which means getting ahead of the problem is a priority. We spoke to Dr Geetika Mittal Gupta, founder and medical director, ISAAC, as well as Mumbai-based dermatologist and cutaneous surgeon Dr Satish Bhatia, on their advice if you want the acne gone, stat.

What causes body acne?

Turns out, the back has a higher density of glands that produce oil and sweat than other areas of the body, making it especially acne-prone. The primary reason for the

flare ups are the same as the angry zits on the face—oil and dead skin cells block pores and lead to a growth of the *P.acnes* bacteria and inflammation. Adding to this, the very location of the back on the body means that most people don't exfoliate and wash the skin on their back enough, leaving the dead skin cells and oil to fester. But a tardy exfoliation routine may not be the only cause. “Any aberration on the skin, the largest organ of the body, is indicative of something amiss internally and requires investigation. While there can be various external causes as well, such as tight clothes and dandruff, acne is often one of the earliest symptoms of hormonal imbalances such as polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS),” says Dr Gupta.

The skincare tips you need to prevent and treat body acne

Be a stickler for post-workout hygiene

If you are struggling with bacne, the easiest step you can take to relieve the condition is to wear loose clothes in breathable fabrics. “Tight clothes cause blocking off of pores and excessive friction, which could lead to clogged pores,” advises Dr Gupta. The idea is to keep the area clean and dry. Make it a habit to shower right after your workout to avoid the sweat creating a breeding ground for the pimple-causing nasties. Another important tip is to change out of sweaty T-shirts and sports bras immediately after working out.

Maintain shower integrity

Another common underlying cause of back acne is also an oily dandruff-infected scalp. Using an anti-dandruff shampoo will ensure that flakes don't fall on the back and shoulders, and clog pores. Ironically enough, washing your hair can also cause bacne breakouts, if you're not careful. If not removed, conditioner residue can settle on the back and clog pores, so rinse the body after conditioning to prevent this. Also, change loofahs as you would change your toothbrush (a doctor recommended three month schedule)—they can be a breeding ground for acne-causing bacteria. Look for a shower gel or body wash containing skincare ingredients like salicylic

acid, glycolic acid or lactic acid and use an exfoliating scrub to prevent dead skin cells from building up and blocking your pores. Even though it sounds counter-intuitive, make sure to moisturise post-shower to soothe and repair the skin barrier.

Rely on targeted skincare treatments

Spot pimple treatments and masks aren't just for your face. A balancing clay-based mask with tea tree oil and salicylic acid, which calms the redness on your face, can relieve inflammation on the body as well. However, don't be disheartened if a cream or a pack that miraculously clears up your face does not work wonders for your back. The penetration of skincare products varies, as the skin on the back is the thickest compared to other areas of the body.

If the symptoms don't alleviate within a few weeks, visit a trusted dermatologist before you start any home therapy or topical medication. Whiteheads, red papules or pus/blood-filled lesions on the chest, back and buttocks could also be miliaria, a fungal infection that mimics symptoms of body acne but is caused due to sweat retention. The treatment would vary in that case, cautions Dr Bhatia.

“Depending upon the severity and type of body acne, we can start on oral antibiotics (doxycycline and Limecyclyne) or oral retinoids. It takes three to six weeks for the effects to be visible. Topically, you can apply 6 per cent glycolic acid and 10 per cent azelaic acid creams, gels or body spray,” advises Dr Bhatia. Alternatively, for immediate and quickest results book yourself for chemical peels like salicylic acid, phenol or TCA peels at the dermatologists' office. Only make sure that you leave enough time between your appointment and the event you need to attend—peels can leave your skin flaky, so you need to factor in for the downtime.

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