

Gift Ideas For Everyone On Your List! (And You Too!)

SEVENTEEN

SKIN That Glow

Quick
Fixes For
EVERY
ANNOYING
ISSUE

WHAT
YOUR
SELFIE
SAYS
ABOUT
YOU!

THE BEST
WAY TO DUMP
SOMEONE

Dec 2016 / Jan 2017

The Stars Of Fox's
EMPIRE
Bryshere
"Yazz" Gray
& Serayah
On Guy-Girl
Friendships
& More!

OH, ZIT!
YOUR ACNE
SURVIVAL GUIDE
8 Pages Of
Life-Changing Tips
& Advice

IT'S
PARTY
TIME!

Dresses,
Jewelry &
Makeup For
Your Vibe

"I Made Kindness Go Viral" GET INSPIRED!

17's Guide to
**SURVIVING
ACNE**



Oh, Zit!

“ugly”

“insecure”

“gross”

“self-conscious”

“frustrated”

“judged”

See those words on the right? They're just a handful of the ways you described how your acne makes you feel . . . proof the struggle is real. It's not surprising:

Acne is the most common skin condition among young people—and in a *Seventeen* survey of more than 1,000 readers, 93 percent of you said you experience it, too. But help is here! Read on to discover what causes breakouts, how you can get rid of them, and what to do if they've really got you down.

by Kelsey Castañon
Illustrations by Esra Roise

“hopeless”

“disgusting”

“dirty”

“stressed”

“embarrassed”

what's **really** going

If you see...

BUMPS WITH WHITE CAPS

You probably have ...

Whiteheads

Their technical name is comedones—a fancy way of saying clogged pores covered by a thin layer of skin.

That skin shields the pimple from oxygen; the white or yellowish color is oil and dead skin cells.



BLACK DOTS IN YOUR T-ZONE

You probably have ...

Blackheads

Similar to whiteheads, these are clogged pores—but they're *not* covered by skin. When oil and dead cells are exposed to oxygen, they darken, which is why they appear black, explains dermatologist Dendy Engelman, M.D.



PAINFUL UNDER-THE-SKIN ZITS

You probably have ...

Cystic Acne

When a clogged pore ruptures under the skin, your body tries to stop the bacteria from coming out of the pore by forming a protective cyst around it, explains Dr. Engelman. These have no opening or 'head' and can take weeks to heal.



CHIN AND CHEEK BREAKOUTS

You probably have ...

Hormonal Acne

Hormonal fluctuations (more info at right) produce excess pore-clogging oil. Those blocked pores can appear as whiteheads or cystic bumps on the chin and jawline—the telltale area for period breakouts, says Dr. Engelman.



Causes

under-exfoliating

When you're not sloughing dead skin cells and debris (with a scrub, a peel, or a mask), they can pile up on the skin's surface and trap oil in pores.

pollution

Tiny particles from exhaust, smog, or debris are attracted to your skin's oil and mix with it to create breakouts.

inflammation

Everyone has zit-causing *P. acnes* bacteria on their skin, but studies show that people prone to inflammation are more likely to get breakouts from fighting it.

your period

Right before you get it, estrogen levels dip while testosterone (which ups oil production) holds steady. Oil then blocks follicles, causing deep, painful zits.

stress

Blame it on cortisol, the hormone that spikes when you're freaking out. When cortisol goes up, your skin pumps out more oil than it should.

80%

of acne is due to the presence of certain genes inherited from Mom or Dad, some studies say. (Thanks, guys!)

on?

Blemishes usually brew beneath the skin for two to three weeks before reaching the surface. This is why you're getting yours and how to stop the cycle.

Find your options...

To Treat Whiteheads

Try this first: Spot treatments with sulfur, like **(1)** Alba Botanica Fast Fix for a Pimple (\$6, albabotanica.com), or salicylic acid, like **(2)** Clinique Acne Solutions Clinical Clearing Gel (\$17, clinique.com). Both ingredients reduce oiliness, clear pore blockages, and minimize inflammation. Be sure to take a hands-off approach: Popping zits puts you at risk for infection and also leads to scarring.

If that doesn't work: Try retinoids—they're powerful but potentially irritating. To treat current and future breakouts, Dr. Engelman recommends **(3)** Differin Gel (\$28 for up to a 90-day supply, drugstores); it contains a prescription-strength retinoid called adapalene, now available for the first time over the counter.

To Treat Blackheads

Try this first: A daily scrub that exfoliates skin both physically and chemically. **(4)** Bioré Pore Unclogging Scrub (\$6, drugstores) uses tiny beads to buff away dead skin while salicylic acid dissolves gunk that's left behind.

If that doesn't work: Have them extracted by a pro—at the dermatologist's office or your local spa.

★ GOOD TO KNOW

Antibiotics aren't a long-term solution. "Prolonged use can cause bacterial resistance," says Dr. Zeichner—meaning the bacteria you're trying to treat becomes immune to the effects of the medicine. Scary!

28%
of Seventeen readers have been to a dermatologist for acne. If your breakouts don't clear up after four weeks of OTC treatment, make an appointment!

To Treat Cystic Acne

Try this first: An OTC benzoyl peroxide treatment like **(5)** Clean & Clear Persa-Gel 10 (\$6, drugstores) to reduce the number of *P. acnes* bacteria. To up the ante, opt for an Rx version like Epiduo Forte (it also contains a retinoid) and Aczone 7.5% (it's a once-a-day treatment designed to treat inflammation without irritating skin).

If that doesn't work: Treat inflammation from the inside out with a course of oral antibiotics (like doxycycline or minocycline).

If that still doesn't work: Ask about isotretinoin (formerly referred to as Accutane). Consider it the max-strength oral version of a retinoid, says dermatologist Joshua Zeichner, M.D.

★ GOOD TO KNOW

Isotretinoin completely shuts down your oil glands, so you'll need to hydrate like crazy to avoid peeling or cracking. Plus you'll need to get regular blood work and go on birth control (whether or not you're sexually active) because isotretinoin causes birth defects.

To Treat Hormonal Acne

Try this first: Birth control. These breakouts are linked to hormones called androgens (male hormones that are present in both guys and girls), which produce excess oil so normal creams will only heal *existing* acne—not prevent it from occurring. Estrostep and Ortho Tri-Cyclen are FDA-approved to treat acne by keeping hormones in check.

If that doesn't work: Look into oral spironolactone, which is usually used to treat cardiovascular issues. While not FDA-approved for acne (it treats skin off-label), in low doses it's able to block the signals between androgens and oil production, explains Dr. Zeichner.

★ GOOD TO KNOW

Pimple popped up before a big event? Cortisone shots—which you can get from your dermatologist—are hands down the fastest way to nix a zit. Within 24 hours, the swelling and redness will be pretty much gone.



how to talk to your parents

Feel like Mom or Dad doesn't get it? Clinical psychotherapist Matt Traube shares what to say to get them to see your side.

If they say

"You don't need to see a dermatologist."

You should say: "If someone had back pain, they'd go to the doctor. I am suffering just the same with my skin and I need help."

Why it works: Sometimes people need a perspective check that a skin problem can be just as debilitating as any other medical issue. Pointing that out can highlight its importance.

If they say

"It's just acne—you'll grow out of it."

You should say: "I worry about my skin every day, and it really hurts when you don't take my feelings seriously."

Why it works: People tend to dismiss things they think are small, so your parents may not see that they're trivializing your feelings. Being open and honest about how acne affects your life can help them understand how you feel.

If they say

"The treatments are a waste of money."

You should say: "This is really important to me, and I'm willing to chip in if it means clearing my skin."

Why it works: It's hard to see the value in things that don't affect you directly, so offering to help your parents (by doing chores around the house or getting a job) shows that it's worth a lot to you.

COULD ACNE KILL YOU?

It may not spread rumors about you or leave mean comments on your Instagram, but make no mistake—chronic zits are a huge bully on your self-esteem. Extreme cases have been linked to anxiety—even suicide. And these serious side effects may be more common than you think: A major study says waking up to severe breakouts daily may make you two to three times more likely to develop depression. Worse, another report from the British Skin Foundation found that one in five people struggling with acne has considered suicide. Reason number one? It makes you feel alone. "Skin disorders tend to isolate," says Traube. Suddenly, you're skipping hangouts with the girls or dodging eye contact and conversations. "When you already feel hopeless and embarrassed, that can only intensify those feelings," he says. Throw in the fact that hormones are already sending you on a constant

emotional roller coaster, and it's no wonder acne is seriously stressing you out, says psychologist Jennifer Gentile, Psy.D., M.M.H.S.

But don't give up hope. Nothing is permanent—no matter how much you think it is, says Traube. Ask a dermatologist about your options. And when the anxiety starts to feel like too much, talk to a therapist. Know that you are not alone. (In fact, about 20 percent of teens are just as bummed as you, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.) And remember: Acne is treatable. Says dermatologist Dennis Gross, M.D., "Once your skin starts to clear, you can feel like you have your life back." Gabrielle, 20, from New York, NY, agrees. "I'm not a shy person at all, but acne made me so quiet. Since I started taking medication, literally everything has changed for the better."

Spot the Signs of Depression

Use this checklist so you (or someone you know) can start feeling better.

- ☐ You can't focus in school, and missing assignments has become the norm.
- ☐ You've recently lost or gained a significant amount of weight.
- ☐ Waking up in the morning seems almost impossible, so you're always late to first period.
- ☐ You've skipped out on things like your bestie's party, the school dance, or soccer practice—when you used to love going.
- ☐ You no longer raise your hand in class or look people in the eye to avoid drawing attention to yourself.
- ☐ Alcohol, cigarettes, or other substances have become your coping mechanism.
- ☐ You rarely leave your bedroom, even if it's just to run weekend errands with your family.
- ☐ You'd rather face the consequences of skipping class (or faking sick to get excused) than go and feel self-conscious.
- ☐ Your skin makes you feel that life is meaningless.
- ☐ You've experienced any of the above feelings for more than two weeks.

Checked three or more boxes?

It's time to seek help. Talk with a pro, like a school psychologist or your doctor. It's their job to be judgment-free and make you feel comfortable telling them anything you want. "You can lessen the severity of your depression symptoms if they are addressed early on," says Dr. Gentile.

Need to talk to someone right now? You can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or contact the Crisis Call Center by texting ANSWER to 839863.

“My Skin Stole My Happiness”

Plagued with chronic acne, Patricia, 19, from Mount Carmel, IL, reveals her emotional battle—and how she's learning to handle it.

I used to have clear skin—in fact, friends and teachers would compliment me on how great it looked, making me feel pretty and confident. But my senior year, I started getting breakouts and things changed. At first, I didn't think my acne was unusual: You get a pimple, treat it, and it clears up. But mine didn't go away.

That summer, I could tell by people's long, awkward glances that they were grossed out by my face of swollen red zits. I went away to college, the stares increased, and I became more self-conscious. I tried every over-the-counter face wash and cream out there, and I started caking on foundation, concealer, and powder to hide the bumps. Nothing worked. I go to an out-of-state college, so my insurance wouldn't even cover a dermatologist visit.

I began distancing myself from friends, thinking they'd be embarrassed to be seen with me, and I hardly left my room. When I did go out, friends would recommend acne products, and I sensed overwhelming disgust radiating from strangers. I wished I could scream, “I wash my face three times a day and still look like this. Don't judge me!”

the breaking point

Eight months into my acne nightmare, I worked up the courage to go out to dinner with friends. Afterward, in my dorm room, my pent-up anxiety sent me into a panic attack. I began crying

hysterically, thinking that *everyone* was disgusted by my face. I shook uncontrollably, couldn't control my breathing, and my body and mind went numb. I called my mom, crying, asking how anyone could stand to be seen with me. I felt helpless.

A week later, I met with a family friend who's a psychologist, and she felt I was suffering from social anxiety and clinical depression. She recommended I see a dermatologist and suggested I confide in close friends and family so I don't feel alone. (It's helped.) Because of insurance reasons, I haven't been to a derm yet, but four months ago, my regular doc put me on birth control and an anti-inflammatory antibiotic. They've worked a bit, but I still have severe acne.



52%

of *Seventeen* readers surveyed admitted their skin has made them feel depressed, anxious, or more sad than normal.

I hate that society makes me feel less pretty because of a thing I can't control, but I'm working on loving myself. When I feel insecure, I throw myself into school (I'm proud to be in an honors program) and music. No matter what people say, it *is* what's on the inside that matters most. And I'm doing my best every day to remember that. ★

“How Acne Gave Me Confidence”

Casey, 18, from Madison, NJ, found there was a totally unexpected upside to her struggle for clear skin.

You used to be pretty until you became a pimple face.” That’s an exact text I got from a boy when I was in 7th grade. Yes, I did have acne, but up until then, I had always been self-assured. At that moment, every positive thought I had about myself vanished. I hated looking at myself in the mirror, and I was paranoid that people were talking about me behind my back. I was proven right when I came into school after I got braces and saw my guy friends make faces at each other, as if to say, “How could she have gotten any worse?”

I changed schools freshman year, started taking the acne drug isotretinoin, and thought, Fresh start! But the medicine came with downsides. One big one? My skin became extremely dry, and I was super-anxious that people were staring at my severely chapped lips and wondering what was wrong with me.

a weird change

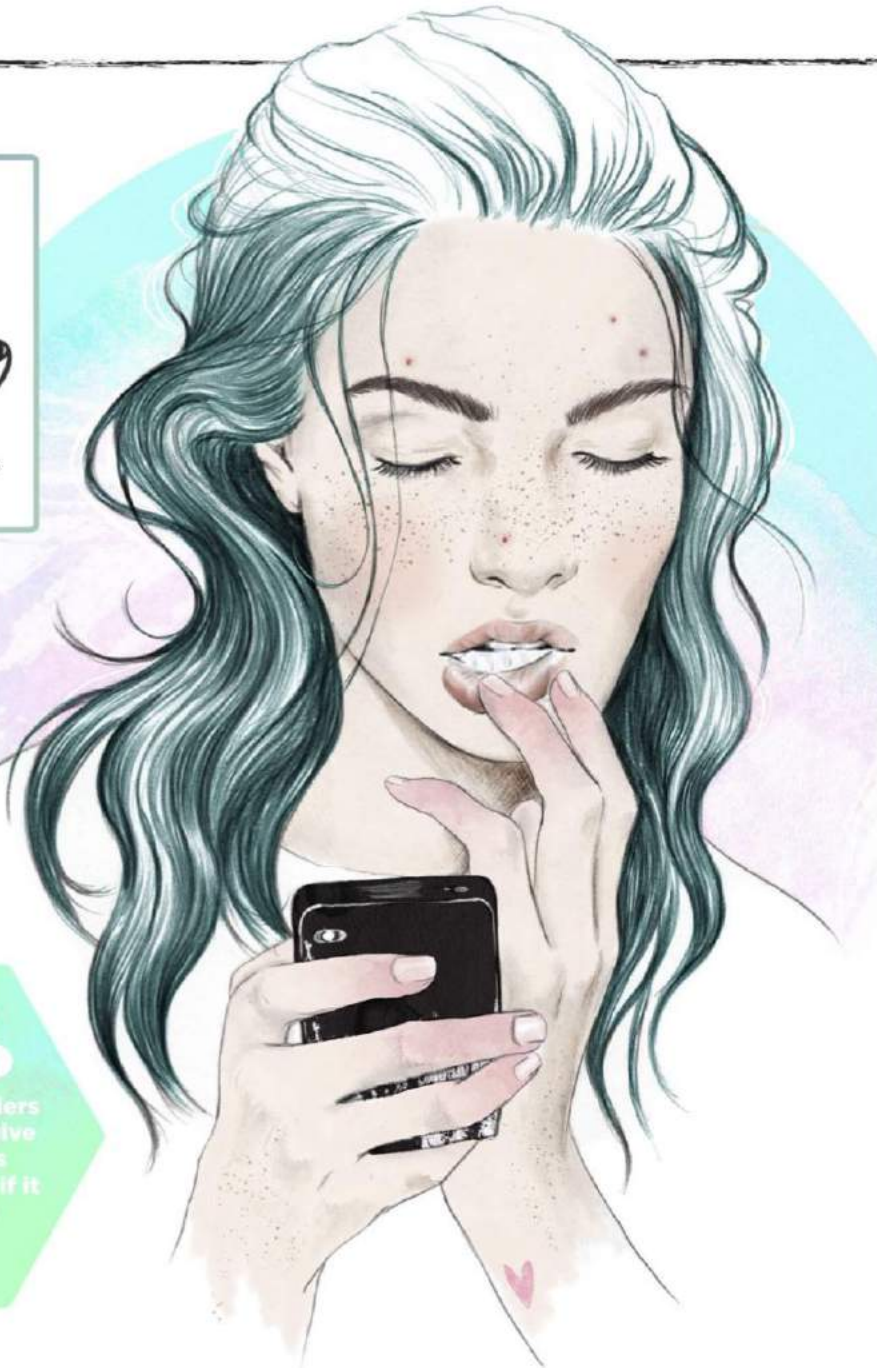
My dad also struggled with bad skin when he was younger, and he told me that “having acne builds character.” It turns out he was right. As the months went on, I began looking people in the eye when I was talking to them, I spoke up in class, and I didn’t mind being the center of attention. I became really outgoing—it was a defense mechanism

against my insecurities. I reasoned that if people liked my personality, they couldn’t laugh at the way my skin looked. And I think for the most part I was right, because I can’t recall a time during that year that I was ridiculed for my skin.

After eight months on medication, I had smooth and clear skin. But as I went into my sophomore year, my acne started to return. I didn’t go back on the meds, though—by then, I had enough confidence that my breakouts didn’t hurt my self-esteem. Plus, I didn’t want to deal with the side effects again. Instead, I figured out an at-home regimen that worked most of the time.

41%

of *Seventeen* readers surveyed would give up their phones for six months (!) if it meant having clear skin.



a silver lining

Today, my skin still is not perfect by any means and I get insecure at times. But now I’m armed with the wisdom that you can never rely on looks alone. (I also learned that having bad skin will not change the way that people who truly care about you will treat you.) Having acne seemed like the end of the world, but I see that it was actually a blessing in disguise. It can make you strong and empathetic—and there should be more people our age like that. ★

don't let **zits** ruin your school year

Hayley, 22, of Buffalo Grove, IL, began suffering from severe breakouts in high school. By her senior year of college, her skin was at its worst. But instead of hiding, she decided to live it up. Here are her best coping strategies:

2 Open Up to Your Support Group

I used to duck out on events because of my acne. But after I confided in my besties that I wasn't feeling stellar, they started making a conscious effort to tell me when people asked why I was skipping plans and that they missed me. It felt great knowing people noticed when I was gone. The point: Don't be afraid to tell your friends your feelings. They can help more than you know.

1 Make a New Year's Resolution

Mine was to improve my perspective on my skin. No matter how bad my face looked, I resolved to go out and enjoy everything I love about school. It wasn't always easy—you may get self-conscious talking to people or when they want to take photos for Insta—but honestly, there are worse problems to have.

3 Remember the Spotlight Effect

This phenomenon is when you feel as if everyone else notices what you're doing and judges you for it. In fact, the only one who pays so much attention to the small details of how you look and what you do is you. I remind myself of that all the time.

CAN'T GET IN TO SEE A DERM?

In the US, there are 3.4 derms per 100,000 people. Average wait time to see one: 28.8 days. If you need help ASAP, try one of these apps.



First Derm, \$25

Send in two photos and a description of your acne. In 48 hours, a board-certified dermatologist will provide you with an over-the-counter treatment plan or recommend you see a doctor. They'll hook you up with an appointment scheduled within the week.



Spruce, \$40

Snap a few pics and answer questions about your skin—a derm will typically respond within 24 hours with a treatment plan (they can even send prescriptions to your pharmacy). Afterward, you can ask follow-up questions, refill your Rx, and schedule additional virtual appointments.

Acne Dysmorphia *It's a Thing*

Your friends say your skin looks amazing... but you don't see it in the mirror. The difference may be in your head. Since you constantly see "perfect" (aka filtered!) skin on social media, it's easy to perceive a tiny imperfection as a big deal. "We see people who've treated their acne and have mild scarring, but they think it's severe," says derm Eric Schweiger, M.D. Visit a counselor or therapist if you can't seem to shake the skin-securities.

Life After Pimples

Faced with bumps, pockmarks, and indentations? Find out what they are—and the best way to nix them.

★ HYPERTROPHIC SCARS

What: Thick, raised bumps.

Where: Usually on the chest and back.

Treatment Plan: Ask your doctor about getting cortisone injections, which help flatten raised skin.

★ ATROPHIC SCARS

What: Depressed, pitted marks as a result of damaged collagen. There are three types: ice pick, which appear to be tiny holes; boxcar, which look like craters; and rolling, which are small indentations that create a "wavy" pattern.

Where: More commonly found on the face.

Treatment Plan: Laser treatments help rebuild collagen and are the most effective, but they're usually priced in the thousands. Subcision, which involves using a needle to break up scar tissue, costs around \$500 per treatment but is somewhat less effective. Mild scarring can be treated with prescription retinoids like Retin-A, so ask your doctor if you could benefit from it.

★ WHAT ABOUT DARK SPOTS?

As your body heals a blemish, it can sometimes overproduce melanin (the protein that gives skin its color), causing hyperpigmentation, or pink or brown spots. Products with hydroquinone and alpha hydroxy acids can speed up the fading process. Try Paula's Choice Resist Triple-Action Dark Spot Eraser 7% AHA Lotion (\$27, paulaschoice.com).