

Acne: "Pizza Doesn't Really Cause Acne, Does It?"

Dairy consumption has been positively linked to acne for many teenagers and adults. There have been numerous studies proving this association, including a portion of the landmark Nurses Health Study involving 47,355 women in 1998. Unfortunately, the reasons behind this milk-acne connection are much less concrete.

Regardless, the facts are that thousands of people have given up dairy foods only to have their acne magically disappear. The results these people have seen speak for themselves and they need no particular explanation. For those of you who are still hesitant on the trial and error method, here are a few different theories behind their success:

- Milk Allergies – Like eczema, acne is an inflammatory skin condition, and can be a byproduct of food allergies. In fact, it is believed that food allergies, particularly dairy and gluten, are the top aggravator of acne. Since acne does take time to come and go, and many food allergy reactions are delayed, about two weeks off of a suspect food is typically required to begin noticing results.
- Hormones – Of course, the teenager with raging hormones and raging zits, it is an all too common site. Hormones are a well-accepted reason for acne within the dermatologic community. It has been estimated that 75% to 90% of milk and milk products on our shelves comes from pregnant cows due to the milking process. This milk contains progesterone and other hormones that are known precursors to DHT, the primary acne-producing hormone in humans. These hormones are carried primarily in the butterfat, and are known to make frequent appearances in milk, cheese, and butter. You mean pizza may be back on the acne list? Dermatologists are split on this issue, but past research shows a strong likelihood.
- Nutrients – Back in the 1960's, Dr. Jerome K. Fisher conducted a clinical study on the cause and effect relationship of milk and acne for a presentation to the American Dermatological Association. His research looked at over 1000 teenage acne patients over a 10-year period. He quickly noted that the severity of their acne and whether it worsened was directly correlated to their milk consumption. Along with the hormones in milk, Dr. Fisher hypothesized that milk sugar (lactose) and butterfat could be acne triggers. It has also been found that milk can contain excessive quantities of iodine (may vary by herd), a well-known pore irritator and aggravator of acne.

Most dermatologists recognize the crucial role that diet plays in skin conditions, and many site milk products as the top food culprit of acne. Dairy elimination may not be the solution for everyone, but something so simple to get rid of acne is definitely worth a shot!

References:“Acne and Milk, the Diet Myth, and Beyond” by F. William Danby, MD, FRCP; Manchester, New Hampshire; Research Paper

- “Acne: How Food Can Cause It”, Food Allergy Solutions Review; News, Ideas & Strategies to Improve Your Health; February 2004; Article.

- “Dairy Products And Acne” by Greg Podsakoff; Article

- “High School Dietary Dairy Intake and Teenage Acne” by Clement A. Adebamowo, MD, ScD, Donna Spiegelman, ScD, F. William Danby, MD, Lindsay Frazier, MD, Walter C. Willett, MD, DrPH, and Michelle D. Holmes, MD, DrPH; Boston, MA; Hanover, NH; and Ibadan, Nigeria; Report

Resources:

- Acne Medicine - Good support blog run by a dermatologis
- Acne Milk - Dr. William Danby, and his research in the field