

Put A Stop To Summer Skin Problems

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Whether you're basking in the sun on a sandy beach, camping in the wilderness or relaxing in your own backyard, the great outdoors does wonders for de-stressing your mind and boosting your overall well being. But returning to nature can take a toll on your skin. Summertime heat, bugs and sunshine can cause your skin to itch, turn red and break out in bumps. Thankfully, it's easy to fight the effects of nature and keep your skin looking radiant. Here's how to beat some common summertime skin woes.

Problem: Mosquito bites

Solution: Make mosquitoes buzz off before they nibble on you. To help prevent bites, apply a repellent that contains 5 - 30% DEET, such as Muskol or OFF! Maximize protection by applying to exposed skin and clothing before you go outside, says Health Canada. Children from two to 12 years old should use a repellent with less than 10% DEET. When mosquitoes are abundant, cover up in long-sleeve shirts, pants, hats and socks that are light in colour, as dark hues attract the pests.

If you get mosquito bites, it's easy to stop the itch. First, wash the site with soap and water, then put on a soothing product that helps reduce inflammation. Dr. Jaggi Rao, Dermatology residency program director at the University of Alberta and Medical Director of Acne Clinics of Canada, recommends calamine lotion, aloe vera or moisturizers, such as Cetaphil Moisturizing Lotion and Glaxal Base Moisturizing Cream. A specific medicated anti-itch ointment, such as Rexall Anti-Itch Cream, and oral antihistamines can also be helpful. "If the inflammation is greater, it might be necessary to get prescription anti-inflammatory preparations, such as topical cortisone formulations," he says. Bites typically go away quickly on their own, but if they don't respond to these treatments, visit your doctor.

Get more tips on taming bites here.

Problem: Heat rash

Solution: In hot and humid weather, where you're perspiring a lot, it's best to avoid tight clothing and garments made out of non-breathable fabrics, like polyester. Such clothing holds sweat against your skin, which can cause a rash (technically called miliaria) to erupt. "[Heat rash] is due to the obstruction of the opening of sweat glands. The sweat gets trapped in the gland opening, producing an itchy red dot," explains Dr. Peter Vignjevic, a Dermatologist in Hamilton and Assistant Professor of Dermatology at McMaster University.

To prevent a rash, stay in air-conditioned areas and wear clothes that are loose and aerated. And cool your skin with a fan, as it helps perspiration to evaporate, says Vignjevic. If you do get miliaria, soothe your skin with products recommended for mosquito bites.

Problem: Sunburn

Solution: Be safe in the sun, so your skin doesn't burn. Slather on sunscreen before going outside and reapply regularly. Stay in the shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the UV rays are strongest, and be sure to sport a wide-brim hat, sunglasses and loose clothing that protects your arms and legs. (Get more sun protection tips here)

If, despite your best efforts, you get a mild burn, here's what to do: Take a cool bath or apply wet compresses for 20 minutes several times a day to relieve discomfort. Rexall Acetaminophen helps with the pain, too. Use a gentle moisturizer, such as Cetaphil Moisturizing Lotion or aloe vera. This keeps your skin comfortable and hydrated, which may reduce peeling and dryness. If your burn is

itchy, try the products recommended in the mosquito bite section above. And avoid harsh or fragrant soaps, as they may irritate and dry out your sensitive skin.

Problem: Back acne

Solution: Pimples can pop up in all sorts of places, even on your back. "Acne occurs in areas with high concentrations of sebaceous glands (acne is a disease of the sebaceous gland), and they're most common on the face, chest and back," says Vignjevic. If you find that you're getting more blemishes on your back and shoulders in the summer, heat and humidity may be to blame. According to the Canadian Dermatology Association, sweating can clog pores — especially when you wear clothing that is tight to the body — and lead to pimples. (For more info on acne, click here [www.rexall.ca/healthadvisor/conditions/2] As you already know, the same conditions can trigger a heat rash, which are often mistaken for back acne, adds Rao.

The first step in getting red spots to back off is to visit your doctor for a diagnosis. If you have true back acne, your physician may recommend a medication, such as clindoxyl, tetracycline or accutane, to help clear up the condition. Heat rash, on the other hand, needs less aggressive therapy. Try the treatment and prevention tips in the heat rash section above to remedy this skin problem.

Problem: Greasy, shiny skin

Solution: Summer's steamy weather can make your face a shiny, greasy mess. "The increased sweating due to heat and sun exposure can cause greater oil production on the skin's surface," explains Rao. Worry not, it's easy to stop your skin from being slick.

To combat a shiny complexion, wash your face two to three times a day with a mild cleanser, such as Rexall Gentle Skin Cleanser or Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser, that is free of perfumes and harsh additives, he says. "Be careful with some products that contains acids, such as salicylic acid and alphahydroxy acid (AHA), both of which could irritate the skin," Rao says. "In summer, skin irritation is often amplified and can result in pigmentation when there's exposure to sunlight." After cleansing, follow up with a good moisturizer, such as Complex 15 Daily Face Cream, and practice sun safety to keep your skin grease-free. If you feel shiny while on the go, try a facial blotting paper to absorb the excess oil, says Vignjevic.