

dermatology at Montreal's Jewish General Hospital. Add to that overproduction of oil, plugged hair follicles, bacteria and even exposure to weather extremes. While getting married is one of the happiest moments of a girl's life, it's considered one of the top four biggest life changes—so it's no wonder your wedding stress is written all over your face.

ACNE 101

Acne can be mild to extreme and can appear in many forms from blackheads and whiteheads to papules, pustules, nodules and cysts (unfortunately, many people have a tragic combination of all these skin blemishes). If your spots are mild and you've found a non-prescription potion that is an effective zapper for you, medical attention is not necessary. But, if your acne is more severe, it's important to consult with a dermatologist who will determine the best options for your skin.

"When a new patient books an appointment with me, I ask them to bring in everything they've ever used to treat their acne," says Dr. Lisa Kellett, a dermatologist at Toronto's SpaMedica. "It's like a kindergarten show-and-tell." Dr. Kellett reports most times her patients misdiagnose their skin and end up using the wrong products—a medical pro can recommend the right fixes for you.

Another reason to turn to a professional? "Leaving severe acne untreated can lead to cysts," explains Dr. Frank Beninger, director of cosmetic surgery at Toronto's Beresford Clinic. "Cystic acne can cause permanent scarring, at which point the only solution is cosmetic surgery."

SPA SOLUTIONS

Some specialty spa treatments may help your condition if you choose wisely. "Facials are good if you're going to someone who's reputable and is using products suitable for oily skins," says Dr. Kellett. Peels are another spa option (about \$80 to \$150 per treatment). They range from mild lactaric peels (milk-based for sensitive skin), to powerful glycolic acid and salicylic acid peels.



SKIN TIP

Just because you're breaking out doesn't mean you should skip the moisturizer. Shop for a product packed with vitamins C and E as well as lysosome enzymes, which have healing antioxidant and antibacterial properties.

"Almost anyone will benefit from a glycolic peel," says Toronto dermatologist Dr. Marie Gidon. "It gets rid of dead surface cells, helps unclog pores and delivers glowing skin." If you suffer from moderate to severe acne and need a quick pre-wedding fix, Dr. Gidon recommends a peel of 30% to 70% glycolic acid no less than seven to 10 days before your event, which can be coupled with a daily regimen of topical antibiotics to dramatically improve your skin's appearance and texture.

Another option that's a hit with former acne sufferers in recent years: microdermabrasion. This is

ZIT ZAPPERS

These five great over-the-counter systems can help put your skin in shape to get your glow on. Wash your worries away with one of these oil-fighting lines, which boast a range of products with various active ingredients—from cleansers and toners to masks and moisturizers—specifically tailored to target acne-prone skin.

Biophora Acne/Oily Skin Types

System This five-step medical line tailored to your skin exfoliates with glycolic acid and green-tea-infused Bioactive Cleanser and ends with Antibacterial Veil, which puts up a silicone barrier against bacteria. About \$240 for a six-month supply, available at www.biophora.com or 1-888-578-5001.

Estée Lauder Clear Difference Oil-Control Collection

The exclusive Absorb Complex of this three-step system falls oil with a deep pore purifying facial and advanced oil-control hydrator. Costs \$90 for a three-month supply, available at department stores.

La Roche-Posay Effaclar

This three-step system is formulated with spring water, 1.5% salicylic acid and a reg stored patented ingredient (lipo-hydroxy acid). These products cost \$61, available at Shoppers Drug Mart, London Drugs and Pharma Plus.

Proactiv Solution This direct-to-consumer prescription-grade, benzoyl peroxide-based kit kills bacteria living on the skin's surface. About \$54 for a two-month supply of these products, available at www.proactiv.com.

NeoStrata Oily to Acne-Prone Skin

NeoStrata's Oil-Free Foaming Gel Cleanser begins this three-step regimen of medically based skin treatment containing four to eight percent glycolic acid. Costs \$77, available over the counter or at www.neostrata.com.



skin