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Your prom is just a distant memory, but acne flare ups may have resurfaced back into your life at the most inappropriate moment. Causing anxiety for events from weddings to job interviews, we question the reason millions of adult women suffer from "adult acne". Chronic, persistent acne is a common medical condition for women who either have suffered with it since adolescence or for those who first develop it during adulthood. Either way, the physical and emotional toll that acne causes can be devastating.

Studio City Dermatologist, Gene Rubinstein, M.D., a Clinical Instructor of Dermatology at the UCLA School of Medicine discussed the causes of adult

acne in women and various treatment options. "Adult women often experience acne outbreaks, which rarely respond to the same treatments that worked for them during their teenage years."

While acne typically first appears during adolescence, hormonally influenced acne usually begins in the early-to-mid twenties and can persist well into adulthood. Adult acne may be related to hormones, childbirth, menopause, or stopping the pill. Adult acne may be mistaken for other conditions such as "rosacea" or "perioral dermatitis" which begins as diffuse redness in the cheeks and around the mouth and progresses to pimples and defined vessels, but unlike acne, there are no whiteheads or blackheads.

Hormones and Acne

The cause of hormonal acne is most often linked to androgens, which are the hormones that stimulate the sebaceous - or oil - glands and hair follicles in the skin. When the sebaceous glands are over-stimulated by androgens, acne flare-ups can occur. Nearly half of all women experience acne flare-ups and increased facial oiliness during the week preceding menstruation.

Dr. Rubinstein cautions against diagnosing and treating yourself for adult acne especially if it's accompanied by excessive facial hair growth, irregular menstrual cycles, obesity, infertility or diabetes. "It's vitally important for these women to consult with their physician for

diagnosis and treatment".

Treating Adult Acne

There are several treatment options available including topical retinoids, topical antimicrobials (such as benzoyl peroxide and antibiotics), and oral antibiotics. A dermatologist also may prescribe isotretinoin (Acutane) for cystic acne that is accompanied by scarring. Premenstrual flares caused by increased androgen activity respond well to oral contraceptive pills containing an estrogen and progestin, because they help regulate the menstrual cycle leading to decreased breakouts.

Since women with acne often have drier and more sensitive skin than they experienced during their adolescent years, Dr. Rubinstein advises gently washing the face with mild facial cleansers and avoiding vigorous scrubbing, as it can irritate the skin and make acne worse. In addition, products containing glycolic acid or salicylic acid help remove surface oils and dead skin cells and aid in deeper penetration of acne medication. Dermatologist prescribed acne treatment regimens are most effective because they often consist of a personalized combination of prescription and over the counter medications and usually begin clearing the skin within six to eight weeks. Photodynamic or laser acne treatment is recommended for moderate to severe acne. For occasional pimples, especially those which tend to progress and perpetuate for a long time leaving

a scar, Zeno Acne Clearing Device is recommended. Prescription treatment is often followed by skin care regimens which may include chemical peels, microdermabrasion, cosmeceuticals and over the counter medications. Preventing acne flare ups is the first step to avoiding one of the most bothersome side effect of acne - acne scarring.

Treating Acne Scarring

Once acne is resolved, a clear complexion may be achieved by laser or IPL PhotoFacials, microdermabrasion and chemical peels in combination with skin bleaching regimens. Pitted scars can be softened by laser resurfacing or fillers such as Radiesse, which elevate the depression.

Dr. Rubinstein is the Director of Dermatology and Laser Centre of Studio City and a Clinical Instructor of Dermatology at UCLA.
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