

## Skin Conditions Are No Reason to Skip A Workout

By Candace Nelson

Those of us with skin conditions know an intense workout feels good to the body, but if we're not careful, our sensitive skin pays for it with embarrassing redness or breakouts.

During an intense bootcamp workout class, a fellow recruit pointed at my face and said, "Ohmygod! Your face is so red!" I smiled politely, but was well aware that my rosacea had flared up and my face looked sunburnt – that happens after a tough workout.

Rosacea, acne and eczema are all inflammatory conditions in the skin. Too much heat and stimulation can be problematic, bringing on flare ups and redness. Thankfully, there are ways to mitigate the effects.

### Keep skin cool

Don't give up your workout, but when possible, make cool choices. When checking out a potential gym, make sure it's well ventilated and doesn't feel stuffy. In a class, try to get a spot in front of the fan, advises Laurie Neronha, licensed esthetician, Herbalist and acne specialist and owner of Viriditas Beautiful Skin Therapies in Providence, RI.

Swimming is a great option because water naturally keeps your body cool while you work it. If you prefer working out on dry land, spritz yourself with a water bottle as or after you exert yourself.

"Keep a small bottle of peppermint or cucumber hydrosol chilled in the fridge for when you get home, and spritz liberally all over your body," Neronha recommends. "Hydrosols are created from steam distillation of essential oils, so they retain the active properties of essential oils, without the potential bite, or the price tag." <http://www.mamarosemary.com/>

### Bare your beautiful face

Every skin expert we talked to said the same thing: Skip makeup during your workout. Even non-comedogenic products can potentially clog pores when you are sweating.

“I prefer to have my clients work out before they do any kind of skin care routine,” Neronha says. “Perspiration is the process of ‘pushing out.’ With skin care, we want to ‘push in’ skin nutrition. Wait until after your workout to use any kind of moisturizer.”

Also, keep sweat off your face, if possible, keep a towel nearby and gently pat sweaty skin dry, but don’t rub, Neronha advises. Rubbing causes additional friction and irritation.

#### Hydrate

Be sure to drink water before and during a tough workout. Neronha recommends adding a tiny bit of Himalayan, Celtic or sea salt to your water bottle to help replace trace minerals and prevent dehydration better than water alone.

“Cold peppermint tea, or a few fresh mint leaves added to your water is a good choice, too,” she says. “Peppermint is naturally cooling and refreshing, gently helping to reduce the vasodilation (capillaries opening) that results in that cherry-cheek look.”

#### Choose moderate activity

Exercise, particularly aerobic exercise or cardio, increases the demand for oxygen, which leads to higher respiration, heart rates and an increase in body temperature, which may cause flare-ups of rosacea symptoms. It’s helpful for those with rosacea to choose a low-impact workouts like Pilates, yoga and swimming where they are less apt to overheat, recommends Sandy Johnson, M.D. of Johnson Dermatology in Fort Smith, Ark.

Another trick is to keep workouts short. You get the same fitness by breaking your daily activity into 15-minute sessions as you do all at once, studies show. Consider keeping your run to 15 minutes, then taking a brisk walk later and doing 15 minutes of yoga after that. You might even find small doses of exercise even fit easier into your day.

#### Cool down and clean up

It’s important to cool down immediately after a workout, hold a cool water bottle on your wrists or neck to lower your body temperature. Cooling towels can feel nice post-workout. Use one to mop off your forehead or lay it across your abdomen. Taking a shower or moving to an air-conditioned room can also help.

It’s also important to clean up quickly after getting sweaty, using gentle products. Look for skin wash products containing salicylic acid, benzoyl peroxide or sulfur, say the doctors behind Rodan + Fields, Katie Rodan and Kathy Fields. The doctors specifically designed their UNBLEMISH and SOOTHE lines with acne and rosacea in mind.



If problems persist, ask your doctor about oral antibiotics, but sometimes a gentle mask is enough to clear away the grime and keep skin happy post-workout.

“For skin that tends to acne, putting on a quick clay-based mask for a few minutes after working out can really help remove irritants from the skin,” Neronha said, recommending Lerosett clay mask, which can be found at <http://www.amazon.com>.

Dr. Johnson stresses the importance of avoiding scrubs and overwashing.

“While it’s important to cleanse skin after an intense workout, abrasive soaps and harsh cleansers can irritate the face, stripping away natural moisture, and making acne worse,” she says. “Benzac Skin Balancing Foaming Cleanser gently cleanses and exfoliates the skin by clearing dead skin cells, removing excess oil and targeting clogged pores without over-drying, and can be used in the morning and at night. Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleansing Cloths are also great to tuck into your workout bag.”

Hot water strips your skin of moisture, so it’s important to hydrate all over post-shower.

“Moisturizers containing lipids, such as ceramides, are usually well-tolerated by all skin types, and can improve the skin barrier which is often compromised in people with rosacea,” Dr. Johnson says. “When picking a moisturizer, look for one developed for sensitive skin. Those with rosacea can also consider a once-daily medicine like Soolantra Cream, a prescription topical treatment for the inflammatory lesions of rosacea, to help keep bumps and blemishes at bay. Featuring Cetaphil Moisturizing Cream as a base, Soolantra’s fragrance-free, gentle moisturizing base avoids common rosacea irritants.”

#### Practice safe sun

Sun exposure is a problem for those with rosacea, acne and sensitive skin. To mitigate the sun’s effect, the American Academy of Dermatology recommends timing your workout for early morning or after the sun goes down. If that’s not possible, avoid hot asphalt and opt for shady areas.

Always wear water-resistant sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat if possible. Neronha likes SolarEx MD Matte Zinc Sunscreen SPF 50 because it doesn’t slide off with perspiration or bother acne-prone skin.

Rodan and Fields recommend their Age Shield Hand Balm Broad Spectrum SPF 30 for the sensitive eye area. It doesn’t run off with sweat as traditional lotions tend to.

#### Dress the part

Unfortunately, trendy workout clothes might not be right for eczema sufferers.

“Those with eczema should ditch the tight-fitting, moisture-wicking workout clothes, which may look cute but can chafe and irritate already-sensitive skin — especially after sweating up a storm,” Dr. Johnson says. “Look for gear in light, breathable fabrics like cotton (vs. synthetics like polyester) that don’t scratch or rub the skin. You can also try applying petrolatum like Vaseline under your clothes to help protect skin from getting chafed.”