

15 reasons you're waking up to breakouts — and how to fix them!

There's nothing worse than going to bed with a flawless complexion and waking up to a face dotted with blemishes. You can blame the zit fairy — or check out these derm-approved dos and don'ts when it comes to preventing morning breakouts.

1. Don't use the same washcloth twice.

You'll simply transfer the bacteria you removed from your face earlier in the day back onto your skin, says Dr. Debra Jaliman, an assistant professor at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and author of "Skin Rules." To avoid morning breakouts, grab a fresh towel every time.

2. Do sleep on a clean pillowcase.

Dirt, dust, and oil from your hair can collect on your pillowcase. Add to that some possible night drool (eek!) and your pillowcase becomes a breeding ground for bacteria. Change the cover at least once a week, more if you continue waking up to breakouts, says Dr. Julie Russak, M.D., a New York City dermatologist. And use a satin pillowcase — this weave won't absorb moisture like cotton and will reduce chaffing on the skin.

3. Don't take charge of the TV remote.

Remotes are loaded with bacteria, which can easily transfer to your fingers and then to your face, putting you at risk for blemishes, says Dr. Debra Jaliman. Wash your hands after handling a remote and remember to wipe it down with an antibacterial wipe at least once a week.

4. Don't reach for that late-night snack.

Sweets or even a sugary cocktail before bed can spike blood sugar levels and create inflammation, worsening conditions such as acne, says Dr. Julie Russak. They can also increase energy levels, affecting your sleep. The less sleep you get, the more your body releases glucocorticoid — a steroid that can exacerbate breakouts.

5. Do switch up your cleanser before your period.

A spike in hormones the week before your period can put oil glands into overdrive, predisposing skin to breakouts, says Dr. Joshua Zeichner, director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. Switch to a salicylic acid-based cleanser during this time to help reduce excess oil. Leave it on your face for a minute so it has time to work.

6. Do stare at the ceiling.

Sleeping on your side or stomach allows oil from your hair to come into contact with the skin, which can lead to breakouts, says Dr. Julie Russak. Instead, sleep on your back with your hair pulled away from your face using a headband or hair tie. Elevate your head with a couple of pillows to lessen the effects of puffy eyes in the morning and prevent “crinkles” (aka sleep lines) from turning into wrinkles.

7. Don't take stress to bed with you.

Easier said than done, but stress can increase the oil production in your skin and promote inflammation. Meditation, yoga and calming music before bed will relieve stress and help avert morning breakouts, says Dr. Joshua Zeichner.

8. Don't bring your cell phone to bed.

Bacteria found on cell phones can put your skin at risk for breakouts, especially around the mouth and cheeks, says Jaliman. If you must use your cell phone before bed, give the screen a swipe with an alcohol-based wipe.

9. Do sleep in a cool room.

A too-warm room will cause pores to contract and expand — and once sweat gets in, pores can become clogged and prone to blackheads and breakouts. They'll also become more visible in the morning, says Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank, M.D., director of The Fifth Avenue Dermatology Surgery and Laser Center in New York City. The ideal room temperature: 65 to 68 degrees.

10. Don't be tempted by Netflix.

You add stress to your body when you lose hours of sleep, which can increase glucocorticoid production and lead to breakouts, says Meghan O'Brien, M.D., clinical instructor at Weill Cornell Medical Center. Aim to get at least 7-8 hours of shut-eye every night.

11. Do wash your face twice a day.

As simple as it sounds, washing your face twice allows you two opportunities to remove bacteria and prevent breakouts, notes Dr. Meghan O'Brien.

12. Don't pick that pimple.

Resist the urge to squeeze a blemish. It will likely look worse in the morning and can lead to scarring, says Dr. Meghan O'Brien. Take a warm compress to any lesion that contains pus (no squeezing!), and apply a drying or spot treatment containing salicylic acid, benzoyl peroxide or sulfur.

13. Do invest in a nighttime retinoid.

A prescription retinoid or an OTC retinol will encourage overnight cell turnover of the skin's outer layer while also thickening the middle layer of skin over time, says Candace Spann, M.D., a dermatologist in Las Vegas, Nevada. Loss of collagen in the middle layer can lead to the formation of wrinkles.

14. Don't be overly aggressive with your skincare products.

Abrasive scrubs, harsh cleansers or alcohol-based toners can actually cause sebaceous glands to go into overdrive and lead to more morning breakouts. A better choice is a gentle cleanser with salicylic acid to help open pores and remove trapped dirt and oil, says Michael Lin, M.D. an adjunct professor of clinical medicine at University of Southern California.

15. Do exfoliate at least once a week.

You have two options: a physical exfoliator (such as a scrub or an electronic brush) or a chemical exfoliator (a topical cream or lotion that contains salicylic or glycolic acid). Either will lighten brown spots and clear clogged pores, leading to better looking skin in the morning, says Dr. Omar Torres, M.D., of DermGroupNYC.