

# Acne Treatment for Women of Color

## Skin Damage Is the Top Risk Associated with Breakouts

Feb 10, 2010 [Riki Markowitz](#)

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Women of color are not at greater risk for developing acne, but they do need to approach treatment differently.

Women of color are at greater risk of [hyperpigmentation](#) from acne compared to female Caucasian patients. [African-Americans](#) are five to 15 times more likely, and Asians are three to five times more likely to develop acne-related keloid scars compared to white people. Dr. Alan Rockoff of The Rockoff Dermatology Center in Brookline, Mass., reports that treatment of acne in people of color is not different than treating light skin. Special care, however, should be taken to avoid irritating the skin and damaging pigmentation.

### Prevent Acne Breakouts

Prevention of breakouts is even more important for women with darker skin because it's more likely to scar from acne that's not even very severe. Dark spots can occur after the lesion heals. And though the spots may not be permanent, they can last for months, or even years. To decrease inflammation, Dr. Philip Young, a facial plastic surgeon in Seattle, suggests using a bacteria-killing, sensitive skin cleanser combined with two percent salicylic acid.

### Darker Skin and Inflammation

One dermatologic surgeon in Manhattan, Jordana Gilman, MD, agrees that women with darker skin tones tend to have more inflammation associated with acne—even with mild blemishes, like those caused by clogged pores. “[W]henver there is inflammation in the skin, the pigment cells may become hyperactive, leading to a dark mark that may persist for months after the acne spot has gone away.”

## Prescription Medication to Treat and Prevent Acne

For treating acne, Dr. Arnold Oppenheim, a dermatologist in Virginia Beach, admits to putting patients of color on oral medication quicker than other patients. "Retin A microgel 0.04 is preferred since it causes less inflammation. Inflammation can lead to pigmentation damage." Since benzoyl peroxide can irritate skin, it's best that women of color steer clear of this topical ointment.

## Sun Block to Protect Skin of Color

Dr. Gilman also points out that women need to wear sun block. Many people of color think that they're protected from the sun's harmful rays, but in actuality, the sun can worsen hyperpigmentation caused by acne.

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## Steroids for Treating Acne

Another way to prevent pigment changes is to have steroid injections in the lesion. Steroids will help speed cell regeneration and reduce the chances of developing acne-related skin damage.

## Laser Treatment for Breakouts

According to the website Acne.org laser therapy works by exciting the chemical compounds and killing the bacteria that resides in acne. Fewer bacteria should reduce the occurrence of acne. More prevalent in past years, laser treatment was causing excessive scarring affecting the skin pigmentation in women of color. Laser equipment is more sophisticated now. Folks with darker skin can undergo therapy that combines light and radio frequency to reduce scarring and less pigmentation damage caused by acne.

### *Sources:*

DermaNetwork.org "Acne Scars & Acne Scarring" (accessed on February 10, 2010)

Acne.org "Lasers and Acne" (accessed on February 10, 2010)

RealSelf.com "Acne Treatment for African American Skin" (accessed on February 10, 2010)

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