

The Calm Skin Routine Planner

A simple, gentle routine for adult acne-prone skin, and a way to stick with it.

SIMPLIFY · PROTECT · TRACK · ASK

A 12-week plan + six printable worksheets

STUDIO SAMPLE · NOT MEDICAL ADVICE



Fewer products. More patience. Calmer skin days.

If you are an adult dealing with breakouts, you have probably been sold a lot of steps. This planner does the opposite: it helps you keep a short, gentle routine long enough to see how your skin responds.

Adult acne is common, and it is not a sign that you are doing something wrong. Women get it more often than men, and it can continue into the 30s, 40s and 50s, or even start for the first time in adulthood. [2] What helps most people day to day is not a complicated regimen but a consistent one: gentle cleansing, products that will not clog pores, sun protection, hands off, and enough time. [1][5]



By the end, you will have...

A two-minute morning and evening routine, a shelf you have checked, a safe way to test new products, a 12-week diary and your notes ready for a pharmacist, GP or dermatologist.

How to use this edition

Read pages 4-8 to understand what the sources say. Build your routine on pages 9-15. Use pages 16-23 to test, track and adjust. Print the worksheets on pages 24-29, and keep the one-page summary on page 30.

A STUDIO SAMPLE, READ THIS FIRST

Created by Forgewick in September 2026 to show the quality of our ebook work. It is general skincare information, not medical advice, and it has not been reviewed by a dermatologist or other clinician. It does not diagnose or treat acne. A partner edition is built from the creator's own expertise and reviewed by a qualified professional before release.

Four sections. One steady routine.

Follow the whole guide, or tap a section to go straight to what you need today.

-
- 01

Understand your skin

What adult acne is, what the evidence says and when to get help.

04
-
- 02

Build a simple routine

Morning, evening, labels, habits, sweat and make-up.

09
-
- 03

Test, track and adjust

Time, patch tests, treatments, tracking and a worked 12 weeks.

16
-
- 04

Keep the useful tools

Six printable worksheets and a one-page summary.

24
-

The goal is not perfect skin. It is a routine that is kind to your skin, fits your life and gives any treatment a fair chance.

Adult acne is common, and it has many possible causes.

Knowing the usual suspects helps you notice patterns and ask better questions.

About 95% of people aged 11 to 30 have acne to some extent, and about 3% of adults still have it over the age of 35. [3] The American Academy of Dermatology lists several possible causes of adult acne. [2]

Possible factor	What it can mean for your planning
Fluctuating hormones	Notice whether breakouts follow a pattern, and mention it to your doctor.
Stress	Researchers have found a relationship between stress and flare-ups. Note stressful weeks in your diary.
Family history	Useful context to share at an appointment.
Hair and skin care products	Read labels. Page 12 shows what to look for.
Medication side effect	Never stop a medicine on your own. Ask the prescriber or pharmacist.
Undiagnosed medical condition	Acne can sometimes be a sign of another condition, so persistent acne is worth a check-up.

NOT A SELF-DIAGNOSIS TOOL

This page helps you notice and describe. Only a qualified professional can tell you what is behind your acne and what treatment suits you.

What the evidence says about everyday care.

Three respected sources agree on a short list of basics. None of them is complicated.

01 **Cleanse gently, not often**

Wash affected skin no more than twice a day, and after sweating. [1][3] NICE advises a non-alkaline (pH-neutral or slightly acidic) “syndet” cleanser twice daily on acne-prone skin. [5]

02 **Choose products that will not clog pores**

Avoid oil-based and comedogenic moisturisers, sunscreens and make-up, and take make-up off at the end of the day. [3][5]

03 **Protect from the sun**

Use a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher on uncovered skin outdoors, and choose one labelled non-comedogenic. Tanning can worsen acne. [1]

04 **Keep your hands off**

Picking, popping or squeezing makes acne take longer to clear and raises the risk of scarring. [1][5]

05 **Give it time**

Many treatments take 2 to 3 months to start working. [4]

WHAT ABOUT FOOD?

NICE found there is not enough evidence to support specific diets for treating acne. [5] If you are thinking about cutting out foods, talk to a professional first; this guide does not recommend any diet.

Myths worth letting go.

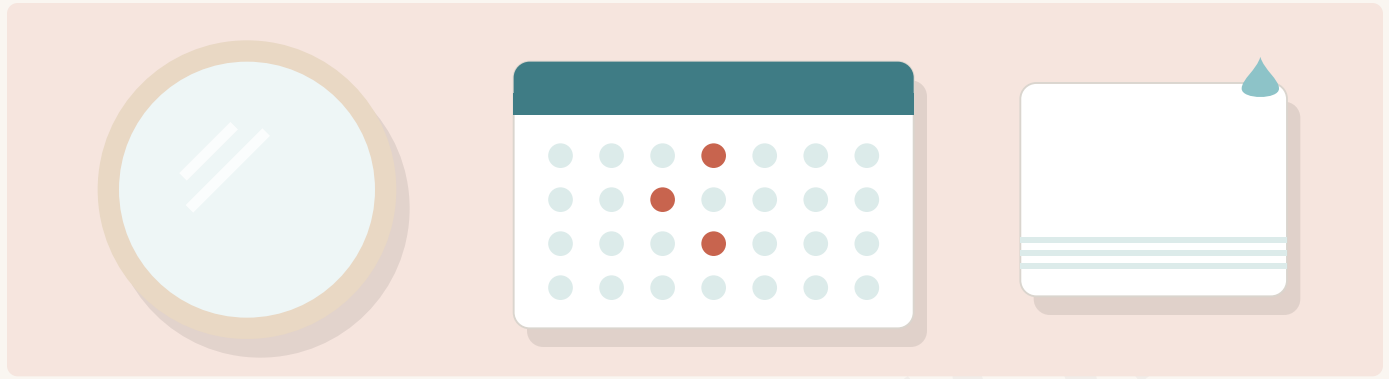
Unhelpful ideas often lead to harsher routines. Here is what the sources say instead.

You may have heard...	What the sources say
"Acne means you are not washing enough."	There is no evidence that poor hygiene plays a role in acne. [3]
"Scrub harder and it will clear."	Apply products with your fingertips; washcloths, sponges and scrubbing can irritate. [1]
"Very hot water opens pores."	Very hot or cold water can make acne worse. Use lukewarm water. [3]
"A tan dries spots up."	Tanning damages skin and can worsen acne. [1]
"Squeezing gets rid of it faster."	Squeezing can make spots worse and increase the risk of scarring. [3][5]
"If it has not worked in a week, switch."	Treatments can take several months; switching often makes it hard to tell what works. [3][4]
"A special diet will cure it."	There is not enough evidence to support specific diets for treating acne. [5]

Letting go of a myth is often the easiest improvement you can make: it usually means doing less, not more.

Describe what you see, without judging it.

Clear words help you track changes and explain them at an appointment.



Where

Forehead, cheeks, jawline, chin, chest, back. Note if one area changes.

What it looks like

Small bumps, blackheads or whiteheads, red or tender spots, or deeper lumps. Use your own words; there is no need for medical terms.

How it feels

Sore, itchy, tight or not at all. Discomfort is worth mentioning.

How it affects you

Your mood, confidence or plans. This matters as much as the spots themselves.

DEEPER, PAINFUL LUMPS

The NHS advises seeing a GP if you have moderate or severe acne or develop nodules or cysts (deeper, often painful lumps). [3]

When to get help.

You do not have to manage acne alone. These are the moments to bring in a professional.

Ask a pharmacist

For mild acne, a pharmacist can advise on over-the-counter gels or creams and how to use them. [4]

See a GP or doctor

If you have moderate or severe acne, nodules or cysts, scarring or a risk of scarring, or acne that is making you feel very low or anxious. [3][4]

Ask about a dermatologist

If breakouts continue despite good everyday care and treatment, the AAD suggests partnering with a board-certified dermatologist. [1] In the UK, a GP can refer you. [4]

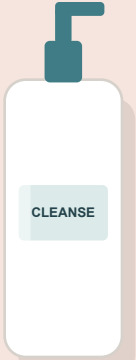
Get support for your wellbeing

NICE recommends considering referral when acne is causing persistent psychological distress. [5] If you feel very low or unsafe, contact a doctor or urgent support services now.

Bring the worksheets from section 04 to any appointment. They save time and help you remember what you wanted to ask.

Your routine has three jobs.

Most adult routines only need a few steps. More products means more chances for irritation.



1 Cleanse



2 Treat, if advised



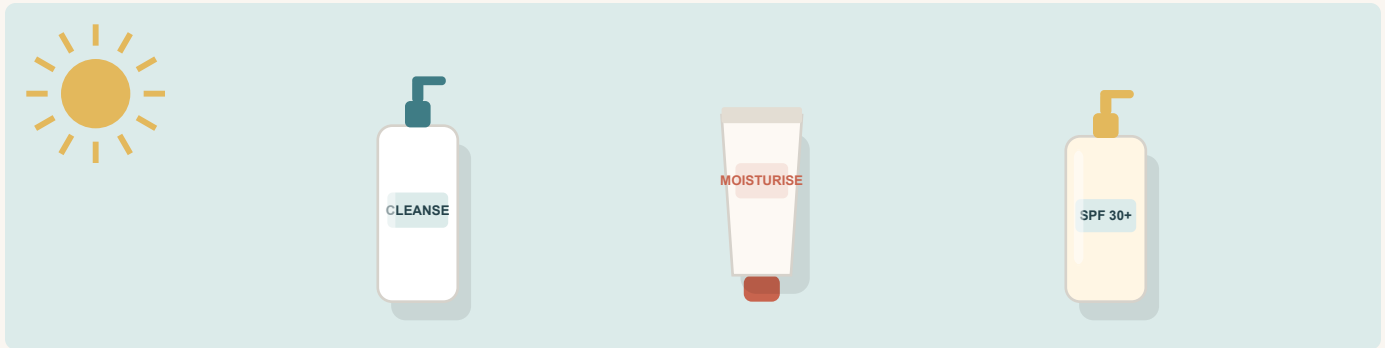
3 Moisturise + protect

Step	Morning	Evening
Cleanse	Lukewarm water and a gentle cleanser, fingertips only	Remove make-up completely, then cleanse gently
Treat	Only if a pharmacist, doctor or label says so	Only if a pharmacist, doctor or label says so
Moisturise	Non-comedogenic, not oil-based	Non-comedogenic, not oil-based
Protect	SPF 30+ sunscreen outdoors (see page 12)	Not needed

Sources: cleansing and products [1][3][5]; sunscreen [1]. “Treat” is optional and personal; this guide does not recommend any specific acne medicine.

A two-minute morning.

Short enough to do on a rushed day, which is the point.



01 Rinse and cleanse

Use lukewarm water and a gentle, alcohol-free cleanser. Apply with your fingertips and rinse. Very hot or cold water can make acne worse. [1][3]

02 Treatment, only if you use one

Apply any product you have been advised to use exactly as directed on the label or by your prescriber.

03 Moisturise lightly

Choose a moisturiser labelled non-comedogenic or “won’t clog pores”, and avoid oil-based formulas. [5]

04 Sunscreen when you head outdoors

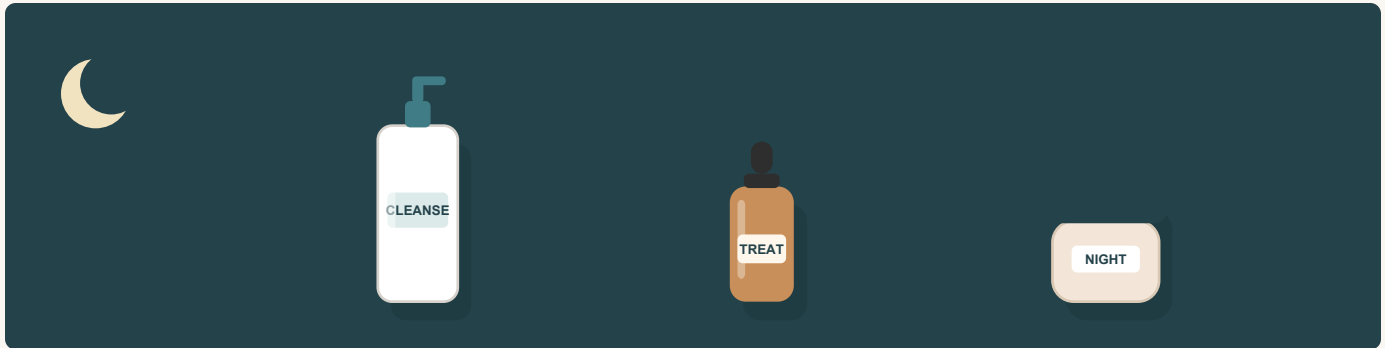
Broad-spectrum, water-resistant, SPF 30 or higher, non-comedogenic, on all skin not covered by clothing. [1]

PAT, DO NOT RUB

Pat your face dry with a clean towel. Scrubbing with washcloths or sponges can irritate your skin. [1]

A wind-down evening.

The evening routine is about removing the day and letting any treatment work.



01 Take make-up off completely

Remove all make-up at the end of the day, including sunscreen and long-wear products. [3][5]

02 Cleanse gently

One gentle cleanse is enough for most people. Do not wash affected skin more than twice a day in total. [3]

03 Apply a treatment as directed

If you use one, follow the instructions. Some treatments are drying at first; tell your pharmacist or doctor if irritation continues.

04 Moisturise

A non-comedogenic moisturiser helps keep skin comfortable.

SKIP, DO NOT STACK

On nights when you are exhausted, a gentle cleanse is better than nothing, and far better than sleeping in make-up. Consistency over the weeks matters more than any single evening.

Read the label in ten seconds.

Four words to look for, and a few to be cautious about.

Look for	Why it matters
Non-comedogenic / “won’t clog pores”	Recommended for sunscreens and skin care on acne-prone skin. [1][5]
Oil-free, not oil-based	NICE and the NHS advise avoiding oil-based products and make-up. [3][5]
Alcohol-free, gentle	The AAD recommends gentle, alcohol-free products. [1]
Broad-spectrum, SPF 30+, water-resistant	The AAD’s sunscreen advice for people with acne. [1]
Be cautious with	Why
Astringents, toners, exfoliants	The AAD suggests avoiding products that irritate, including these. [1]
Heavy hair oils and styling products	Oil from hair can cause acne on the forehead. Check hair product labels too. [1][2]
Lots of new products at once	If your skin reacts, you will not know which one caused it. See page 17.

Labels help, but they are not a guarantee. Your skin’s response over a few weeks is the real test.

Hands-off habits.

Some of the most useful steps happen between routines.

Leave spots alone

It is tempting, but picking, popping or squeezing makes acne take longer to clear and increases the risk of scarring. [1][5] Try keeping hands busy, nails short, or a note on the mirror.

Notice face-touching

Touching your face throughout the day can cause acne to flare. [1] Resting your chin on your hand at a desk is a common one.

Keep hair products off your face

Oil from hair can cause acne on the forehead. [1] Apply styling products away from your face, and consider tying hair back at night.

Skip the tan

Tanning damages skin and can worsen acne. [1] Use sunscreen and shade instead.



Write one habit you want to try this week:



Sweat, sport and hot days.

Movement is good for you. A little planning stops it becoming a trigger.

01 Wash after sweating

Gently wash your face after exercise or a sweaty day. [1] Count it towards your two washes where you can, and keep it gentle.

02 Choose water-resistant sunscreen outdoors

For outdoor activity, the AAD recommends broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher. [1]

03 Use lukewarm water

After a hot day or a hot shower, remember that very hot water can make acne worse. [3]

04 Pack a small kit

A travel-size gentle cleanser and a clean towel make post-gym care easy. Pat dry rather than rubbing.



Make-up, without the guilt.

Wearing make-up is your choice. A few label and routine habits help.

Habit	Why
Choose oil-free, non-comedogenic make-up	NICE advises people with acne to avoid oil-based and comedogenic make-up. [5]
Remove it completely every night	Recommended by both NICE and the NHS. [3][5]
Keep brushes and sponges clean	A practical habit: wash them regularly and let them dry fully.
Test new products before full use	Use the patch test on page 17 for anything new.
Review hair products too	Hair and skin care products are a possible factor in adult acne. [2]

CONFIDENCE COUNTS

If make-up helps you feel like yourself, that is a valid reason to wear it. The aim is products that suit your skin, not going without.

Give it twelve weeks.

Skin changes slowly. Deciding too early is the most common reason people give up on a routine that could have worked.



The AAD says it may take several weeks to a few months to see a difference, and the NHS says many treatments take 2 to 3 months to start working. [1][4] In the UK, NICE guidance has clinicians review first-line treatment at 12 weeks. [5] That is why this planner is built around a 12-week diary.

01 Weeks 1-4: settle

Keep the routine the same. Note irritation, dryness or new breakouts.

02 Weeks 5-8: observe

Look for trends, not single days. Compare your notes and photos in the same light.

03 Weeks 9-12: review

Decide with a professional whether to continue, adjust or try something else.

Introduce one product at a time.

A patch test and a slow start make it clear what your skin is reacting to.

01 Choose a test spot

A quarter-sized spot where the product will not be rubbed or washed away, such as the underside of your arm or the bend of your elbow. [6]

02 Apply twice daily for 7 to 10 days

Use the normal amount, and leave it on for as long as you normally would. [6]

03 Check for a reaction

If there is no redness, itching or swelling after 7 to 10 days, you can go ahead and use the product. [6]

04 If it reacts, stop

Gently wash it off as soon as possible and do not use it again. [6] Record it on Worksheet 3.

05 Then add it alone

Wait two weeks or so before adding anything else, so any change can be traced to one product.

ALLERGIC REACTIONS

Seek urgent medical help for swelling of the face, lips or throat, or difficulty breathing, after using any product.

If you have been given a treatment.

This guide does not recommend any medicine, but it can help you use what you have been advised to use well.

Follow the instructions

Use it as the label, pharmacist or prescriber directs, and ask if anything is unclear. Write the instructions on Worksheet 2 so they sit with your routine.

Protect fabrics

Benzoyl peroxide can bleach hair and clothes, so keep it away from towels, pillowcases and collars. [4]

Tell them if you are pregnant or planning to be

Some acne treatments, including topical retinoids, are not suitable in pregnancy. [4] Always mention pregnancy, breastfeeding or plans to conceive.

Expect a slow start

Many treatments take 2 to 3 months to start working, and some cause dryness or irritation at first. [4] Report side effects rather than stopping or doubling up on your own.

Keep the rest simple

A gentle cleanser, non-comedogenic moisturiser and sunscreen support most treatments. Avoid adding extra active products unless advised.



Track kindly.

A few notes a week are enough. The diary is a tool, not a verdict on you.

Track this	How
A skin-day score	1 (calm) to 5 (very flared). Use the same scale every time.
Routine kept?	Morning and evening ticks. Missed days are information, not failure.
New products or changes	Name and start date, including hair products and make-up.
Life context	Stress, sleep, travel, illness and, if relevant, your cycle.
A photo (optional)	Same spot, same light, once a week. Skip it if it does not help you.

Look for trends over weeks

Skin varies from day to day. Compare weeks 1-4 with weeks 9-12 rather than yesterday with today.

IF TRACKING FEELS HEAVY

If checking your skin often makes you feel worse, track weekly instead, or stop. You can still keep the routine. How you feel about your skin matters, and support is available (page 8).

Stress, sleep and your skin.

You cannot control every factor, but noticing them helps.

Researchers have found a relationship between stress and acne flare-ups. [2] That does not mean acne is your fault, or that you can simply relax it away. It does mean that busy, stressful weeks are worth noting in your diary.



01 Anchor the routine to something you already do

Evening cleanse after brushing your teeth; sunscreen next to your keys.

02 Make the low-energy version official

On hard days: gentle cleanse, moisturiser, done. That still counts.

03 Notice without blaming

Write “busy week” rather than “I ruined my skin”. Patterns are easier to see without guilt.

A worked twelve weeks.

A fictional example of how the planner fits together. Adapt it; do not copy it.

Weeks	What happens	Worksheet
Before week 1	Shelf audit: keeps a gentle cleanser, moisturiser and sunscreen; pauses a toner and a scrub.	1
Weeks 1-2	Two-minute AM and PM routine. Patch tests a new non-comedogenic sunscreen.	2, 3
Weeks 3-4	Adds the sunscreen. Skin score steady at 3. Notes a stressful deadline.	4, 5
Weeks 5-8	Asks a pharmacist about mild breakouts and starts a gel as directed. Protects towels.	2, 4
Weeks 9-12	Scores trending to 2. Books a GP review with the diary and questions.	4, 6
After week 12	Agrees next steps with the GP and keeps the routine.	6

Fictional teaching example. It does not describe a real person, a prescribed treatment or a guaranteed result.

A minimal kit, on any budget.

You do not need a full shelf. Three basics cover most routines.



The basic	What to look for	Tip
Gentle cleanser	Non-alkaline or pH-neutral, gentle, alcohol-free [1][5]	Fingertips, lukewarm water
Moisturiser	Non-comedogenic, not oil-based [5]	A light layer is enough
Sunscreen	Broad-spectrum SPF 30+, water-resistant, non-comedogenic [1]	Daily habit when outdoors
Optional: a treatment	Only as advised by a pharmacist, doctor or label [4]	Add it alone, then wait

No brands or prices are listed: availability and costs vary by country and shop. A pharmacist can help you choose within your budget. [4]

Make the most of an appointment.

A little preparation turns a short appointment into a useful one.

Worth mentioning	Questions you might ask
How long you have had acne and where	What type of acne do you think this is?
Everything you use: skin, hair, make-up	Is anything in my routine likely to be making it worse?
Medicines and supplements, pregnancy plans	Are any treatments unsuitable for me right now?
Your diary scores and photos	How long should I try this before we review it?
How acne affects your mood and life	Is there support available if this is getting me down?

YOU ARE ALLOWED TO ASK FOR MORE HELP

If a routine or treatment has not helped after a fair trial, or acne is affecting your wellbeing, it is reasonable to ask about other options or a referral. [1][4][5]

My shelf audit

List everything you put on your face and hair. Keep the basics; pause the rest.

Product	Step	Non-comedogenic?	Oil-free?	Keep / pause

TIP Pausing is not throwing away. Put paused products in a box for 12 weeks, then decide.

My routine card

Write it once, stick it by the mirror.

MORNING

1 CLEANSE WITH

2 TREATMENT (IF ADVISED) + INSTRUCTIONS

3 MOISTURISE WITH

4 SUNSCREEN

EVENING

1 CLEANSE WITH

2 TREATMENT (IF ADVISED) + INSTRUCTIONS

3 MOISTURISE WITH

4 ANYTHING ELSE

LOW-ENERGY VERSION (THE MINIMUM I WILL DO)

Keep it short. A routine you can do tired is the one that lasts.

Patch test log

Test one new product at a time for 7 to 10 days. [6]

Product + date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Result

Mark each day with a tick, or R for redness, I for itching, S for swelling. If a reaction develops, wash it off gently and do not use the product again. [6]

12-week skin diary

Score 1 (calm) to 5 (very flared). One line per week.

Week	AM kept	PM kept	Score	Changes + context
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

Check in at weeks 4, 8 and 12. Compare trends, not single days.

Patterns I notice

Optional. Notice kindly; this is not a report card.

Week	Stress	Sleep	Cycle / other	New product?	Skin score

PATTERNS I THINK I SEE

Useful for your own planning, or to share with a pharmacist, GP or dermatologist. Skip this page if it does not help.

Appointment notes

Write it down before you go, so nothing important is forgotten.

DATE / WHO I AM SEEING

WHAT I WANT HELP WITH MOST

EVERYTHING I USE NOW (SKIN, HAIR, MAKE-UP)

MEDICINES, SUPPLEMENTS, PREGNANCY PLANS

HOW ACNE AFFECTS MY MOOD AND LIFE

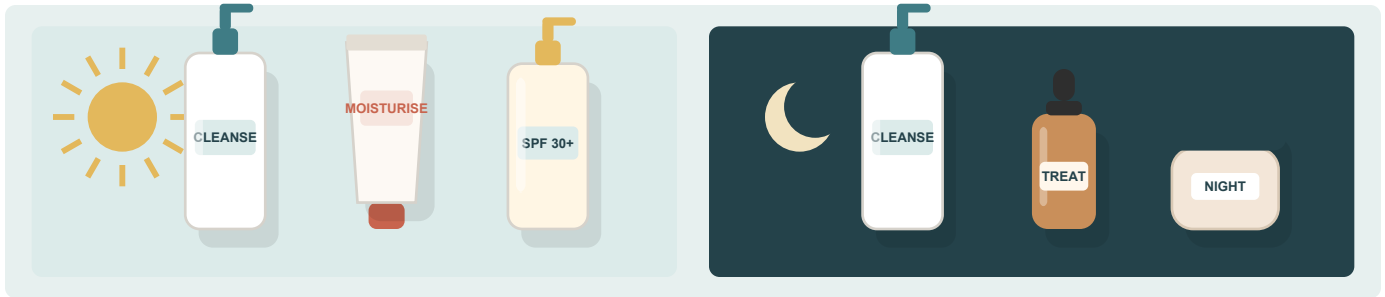
QUESTIONS TO ASK

WHAT WE AGREED / NEXT STEPS

Bring this page with Worksheets 2 and 4.

The calm skin routine, at a glance.

Tear this out, or save it to your phone.



- **Cleanse gently, no more than twice a day, and after sweating**

Lukewarm water, fingertips, a gentle non-alkaline cleanser. [1][3][5]

- **Choose non-comedogenic, not oil-based**

Moisturiser, sunscreen and make-up. Remove make-up every night. [3][5]

- **Sunscreen outdoors**

Broad-spectrum, water-resistant, SPF 30+. [1]

- **Hands off**

No picking or squeezing. Watch face-touching and hair oils. [1][5]

- **One new product at a time**

Patch test 7 to 10 days first. [6]

- **Twelve weeks**

Many treatments take 2 to 3 months. [4]

- **Ask for help**

Pharmacist, GP or dermatologist, and support for your wellbeing. [1][4][5]

The useful fine print

Sources behind the specific statements in this studio sample, and what this edition is and is not.

[1] American Academy of Dermatology: Acne, tips for managing (last updated 16 Nov 2022) [Open the source](#)

Wash gently up to twice daily and after sweating; apply products with fingertips (scrubbing with washcloths or sponges can irritate); use gentle, alcohol-free products; avoid astringents, toners and exfoliants that irritate; use non-comedogenic sunscreen, broad-spectrum, water-resistant, SPF 30+ outdoors; picking or squeezing makes acne take longer to clear and raises scarring risk; touching the face can cause flares; hair oil can cause forehead acne; tanning can worsen acne; results may take several weeks to a few months; see a board-certified dermatologist if breakouts continue.

[2] American Academy of Dermatology: Adult acne [Open the source](#)

Women get adult acne more often than men; acne can continue into the 30s, 40s and 50s or start in adulthood. Possible causes include fluctuating hormones, stress, family history, hair and skin care products, medication side effects and undiagnosed medical conditions. If nothing clears acne, see a dermatologist.

[3] NHS: Acne (page last reviewed 3 Jan 2023) [Open the source](#)

About 95% of people aged 11 to 30 have acne to some extent and about 3% of adults over 35. Do not wash affected skin more than twice a day; very hot or cold water can make acne worse; do not squeeze spots; avoid oil-based make-up, skincare and suncare products and remove make-up before bed. No evidence that poor hygiene plays a role. See a GP for moderate or severe acne, nodules or cysts.

[4] NHS: Acne treatment (page last reviewed 3 Jan 2023) [Open the source](#)

Many treatments take 2 to 3 months to start working. A pharmacist can advise on over-the-counter gels or creams for mild acne. Benzoyl peroxide can bleach hair and clothes. Topical retinoids are not suitable during pregnancy. GPs may refer to a dermatologist for scarring or when acne makes you feel very low or anxious.

[5] NICE guideline NG198: Acne vulgaris, management (published 2021, last updated 3 Aug 2026) [Open the source](#)

Recommendations 1.2.1-1.2.4: a non-alkaline (pH-neutral or slightly acidic) syndet cleanser twice daily; avoid oil-based and comedogenic moisturisers, sunscreens and make-up; remove make-up at the end of the day; persistent picking or scratching can increase scarring risk. 1.3.1: not enough evidence to support specific diets for treating acne. 1.4.4-1.4.5: consider referral when acne contributes to persistent psychological distress. 1.5.12: first-line treatment is reviewed at 12 weeks.

[6] American Academy of Dermatology: How to test skin care products (last updated 10 Aug 2021) [Open the source](#)

Apply the product twice daily for 7 to 10 days to a quarter-sized spot where it will not be rubbed or washed away, such as the underside of the arm or the bend of the elbow. No red, itchy or swollen reaction after 7 to 10 days: go ahead. If a reaction develops, wash it off gently and do not use it again.

About this edition

Written, illustrated and designed by Forgewick, operated by Haris Sohail. Studio Edition 1.0, September 2026. All text, illustrations and worksheets are original. General skincare information for adults; not medical advice; not reviewed by a dermatologist or clinician; it does not diagnose or treat any condition.

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Fewer steps. More patience. Calmer days.

A gentle routine for adult acne-prone skin,
a 12-week diary and six printable worksheets.

FORGEWICK

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