



Topical acne medications & skin care

Dr. Cindy Huang and Dr. Joan Li

1. How much medication to apply

A pea-sized amount of product will cover the surface area of a hand. Use 2 “peas” for the face.

2. Field treatment

The goal of the medications is to prevent acne rather than treat the active spots you have now. Apply medication to the whole area where you would ever get acne, not spot treatment.

3. Topical vitamin A

Start with twice a week and work up to every night over the next month. Dryness, redness and peeling is the norm. In most cases, this will get better with time (6 weeks) so unless side effects very intolerable, continue so you can develop tolerance. Apply at night after your face has completely dried from washing. You can layer moisturize first then use the vitamin A. Do not use with benzoyl peroxide at night.

4. Moisturize

If your skin is dry or irritated, use moisturizer. Cerave PM (can use day and night) is moisturizing but light. If need more hydration, try Cerave Moisturizing cream or Avene.

5. Other active skin care

Salicylic acid, benzoyl peroxide, glycolic acid and niacinamide are other helpful ingredients. If you are already using these and are tolerating them well, you can continue with your prescribed topical acne medications. Do not use benzoyl peroxide at night with topical vitamin A's. If you are not using these ingredients, Dr. Huang will tell you when to add them if necessary. It may be too irritating to start them at the same time as prescription topicals.

6. Keep going

You may not see results for 3 to 4 months. Regular consistent use is key.

7. Apply Sunscreen

Apply regularly and everyday, even cloudy days. Prevents worsening of scar hyperpigmentation and sunburns. Use physical sunscreen with zinc oxide or titanium oxide. Brands include: Skinceuticals Sheer Physical, La Roche Posay Anthelios Mineral.