

Dermo-cosmetic strategies for acne in general practice

A quick-reference guide summarising key dermo-cosmetic strategies to support acne management in general practice, based on the HealthCert Education webinar presented by Dr Ryan De Cruz, in collaboration with La Roche Posay. [Watch replay >](#)

At a glance

- 1. Skincare supports acne treatment; it does not replace it**
 - Dermo-cosmetics can improve tolerability, support adherence and complement evidence-based acne therapies.
 - Focus on simple routines patients will follow consistently.
- 2. Protect the skin barrier**
 - Irritation from acne treatments is common and can reduce adherence.
 - Recommend:
 - Gentle cleanser
 - Non-comedogenic moisturiser
 - Daily SPF 50+
- 3. Topical retinoids remain central to acne management**
 - Effective for comedones, inflammation, acne maintenance and post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation.
 - Improve tolerability by introducing gradually and using moisturiser before/after application if needed.

Useful ingredients in acne care

Niacinamide

- Supports the skin barrier
- Anti-inflammatory
- May reduce redness and irritation

Azelaic acid

- Anti-inflammatory and comedolytic
- Useful adjunct for acne and post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation

Salicylic acid (BHA)

- Helps reduce comedones
- Avoid overuse to prevent barrier disruption

Benzoyl peroxide

- Effective anti-inflammatory acne therapy
- Useful alongside topical retinoids

Prescribing tips

When starting topical retinoids

- Set expectations: irritation can occur initially
- Start gradually and prioritise moisturiser use
- Avoid adding multiple active products at once

Pregnancy

- Avoid topical retinoids
- Consider suitable alternatives such as azelaic acid and niacinamide

Pigmentation-prone patients

- Acne control is essential
- Sunscreen is critical
- Retinoids and pigment-targeting therapies can help reduce post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation

Common patient questions

“Do I need lots of products?”

No. A simple, consistent routine is usually best.

“Is acne caused by poor hygiene?”

No. Acne is an inflammatory condition, not a hygiene problem.

“Can I use lots of active ingredients together?”

Avoid overloading the skin. Too many actives can worsen irritation and compromise adherence.

When to consider referral

Refer or seek specialist input for:

- Severe or nodulocystic acne
- Scarring or high risk of scarring
- Significant psychological impact
- Diagnostic uncertainty
- Poor response despite appropriate treatment and adherence
- Patients requiring isotretinoin or complex systemic therapy

The acne skincare framework

Morning

Cleanse > Treat (if required) > Moisturise > SPF 50+

Evening

Cleanse > Prescribed acne therapy > Moisturise

Key message

The best acne routine is one that patients can tolerate and maintain. Protecting the skin barrier improves adherence and supports better outcomes.

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