

allure

THE BEAUTY EXPERT

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They say an apple a day keeps the doctor away. But that apple's not going to do a damn thing to keep you out of the dermatologist's office. There are, however, a few other things that will, whether you're faced with blemishes, fever blisters, raging redness, or a host of common complexion saboteurs. It's a matter of being your own M.D., spotting trouble before it's full-blown, and following the right protocol to keep skin calm and clear. Of course, this beat-'em-to-the-punch approach to skin care may be second nature to all those type A's who alphabetize their CDs. For the rest of us, there is always what dermatologists and political advisors call "damage control"—ways to keep trouble from overstaying its welcome when you've slipped up and invited it in.

REDNESS

Chemical peels, waxing, and rosacea have something in common—they all can make you look like Ted Kennedy.

PREEMPTIVE STRIKE: Avoid that not-so-royal flush by using a mild cleanser, such as Cetaphil, with lukewarm water, suggests New Orleans dermatologist Mary Lupo. Steer clear of Retin-A as well as glycolic and salicylic acids about three days before peels or waxing to reduce irritation. **Washington, D.C., dermatologist Tina Alster suggests applying an ice pack to the targeted area 10 to 15 minutes before the treatment to prevent redness.**

Rosacea sufferers need a more detailed plan of attack. Avoid vasodilators—spicy food, alcohol, aspirin, and the sun—which trigger blood vessels to expand. Lupo also prescribes antibiotics such as topical metronidazole (Metrogel and Metrocream) and sulfacetamide (Sulfacet) or oral tetracycline (Dynacin, Minocin). A longer-lasting solution is a few rounds with a laser or Intense Pulsed Light to close blood vessels near the surface of the skin. However, Lupo says, it needs to be touched up every one to three years.

COUNTERATTACK: So you went to town on that half bottle of merlot at dinner, and now you look like the lobster special. Rubbing on an over-the-counter cortisone cream, such as Cortaid, reduces the redness (but do not apply it to broken skin). There are also several products designed for skin stressed by chemical peels and waxing, such as Clinique Cx Rapid Recovery Cream with antioxidants and yeast extract, or plain old Aquaphor Healing Ointment, which has been clinically proven to reduce the healing time of dry, irritated skin. If the redness is caused by rosacea, apply Clinique Cx Redness

**SPEEDY
SKIN
RELIEF**

ACNE

Contrary to high-school science-teacher wisdom, pimples aren't caused by dirt, pizza, or too much, shall we say, self-love. The problem starts when pores become plugged with a combination of dead skin and oil. And it doesn't always stop when you graduate. According to Lee, 80 percent of adults are afflicted with acne at any given time. **However, "adults are more likely to get red bumps, rather than black- or white-heads, and they usually develop on the nose or cheeks," Alster adds.**

PREEMPTIVE STRIKE: Just as submarines blare alarms as they ascend, pimples radiate pain to the surface of the skin as they rise. If you feel it, dab an antibacterial benzoyl peroxide cream that's no stronger than 5 percent on the spot. It helps stop bacteria from brewing and eventually erupting. Always wash skin with an exfoliating salicylic or glycolic acid cleanser like Neutrogena Oil-Free Acne Wash Cream Cleanser or M.D. Formulations Facial Cleaner with Glycolic Acid. Add a light, oil-free moisturizer, such as L'Oréal Pure Zone, on top; forgoing moisturizer altogether will only cause the skin to pump out more oil.

COUNTERATTACK: Hands off that big blemish. "Picking will make the mark more noticeable, last longer, and possibly leave a scar," Sklar says. The fastest fix, typically used for monster cysts, is a cortisone shot from a dermatologist, which Franks says dramatically reduces inflammation in hours and eliminates the pimple completely in 12 hours.