

STYLE *on Wednesday*

THE BODY BEAUTIFUL



Your guide to make-up and more by Lesley Thomas. This week: teenage skin

It's tough being a 21st-century teenager. When I was a girl we didn't have to worry about constantly redesigning a MySpace page; eco-angst, recently identified as a big concern for teenagers, had not been invented; and, right now, of course, there's exam stress. It's all playing havoc with already compromised pubescent skin.

A sizeable proportion of my mailbag comes from concerned parents asking for advice about their offspring's gunky pores. It is true that adolescent acne is a passing phase but, as Dr Susan Mayou, a dermatologist with particular expertise in teenage skin, says: "There is a lot that can be done if the problem is bad, from using topical products to prescribed drugs. Yes, they will probably grow out of it, but why should their confidence be blighted?"

Teenage acne is caused by a hormonal shift at puberty. Increased testosterone stimulates a surge in production of sebum, the skin's natural oil, and the pores can become blocked and inflamed. A blackhead is simply an open pore that is clogged with melanin [skin pigment], skin particles and skin debris.

"The dark colour is melanin, not dirt as many people believe," explains Mayou. "Parents are often focused on getting their teens to clean their skin. While it is important to remove grime, hygiene is rarely the issue."

For general teenage skin maintenance, the face should be cleaned twice a day and a gentle exfoliant – to loosen the pore blockages – used once a week. Don't rule out a light moisturiser, says Mayou, "especially if the cheeks are dry, but don't overload the face with creams".

In extreme cases GPs may prescribe antibiotics or the drug Roaccutane, although this has been linked to depression among those who are predisposed to it. As for over-the-counter remedies, Mayou recommends skincare products that will dry out spots and calm inflammation.

Several companies have launched skincare ranges specifically for teenage skin this year. Face Boutique, a reasonably posh brand aimed at savvy "green teens", which uses high-grade, natural ingredients from renewable resources, is one of the best.

"Young skin requires a product that will keep the skin clean and well hydrated without clogging the pores," says the brand's creator, Sarah Vorbech. Try Fresh Faced Moisturising Gel (£12, spacenk.co.uk or faceboutique.com), or the Peachy Clean Foaming Facial Wash (£12), which removes grime without stripping the

skin's protective layers.

Amie, another great range for teenagers, was created by a former Estée Lauder executive who realised that there were not enough gentle, products around for her teenage daughter. The products don't contain any aggressive chemicals and come in recyclable packaging. The Morning Dew Matte Finish Moisturiser, which includes sebum-regulating bilberry extract, is especially good, as is the New Leaf Skin Exfoliating Polish with bamboo and jojoba beads. All Amie products cost less than a fiver and are available from Superdrug.

For those with more cash to splash, Dr Alkaitis Organic Soothing Gel (£36, www.alkaitis.co.uk) is a botanical, antibacterial formula with nettle, myrrh, witch-hazel and mint, which will moisturise while calming angry outbreaks, so it's brilliant for skin that is both dry and spotty.

Don't be afraid to use oils – some of them will actually help to soothe acne. I've used ESPA Balancing Face Treatment Oil



Gentle touch: teen cleansers

(£46, espaonline.com) for spotty moments of my own. It's pricey, but you only use a tiny amount so it will last a good six months. Elemis SOS Emergency Cream (£47, timetospa.co.uk) is another one I rely on to guide my T-zone back to clarity.

For attacking individual zits, I like Ole Henriksen Roll On Blemish Attack (£20, hqhair.com), which contains salicylic acid, a great ingredient for dislodging pore blockages, and Mario Badescu's Drying Lotion (£15.50, hqhair.com) will calm unsightly eruptions overnight.

Many parents worry that their daughters will exacerbate the problem by slapping make-up on top of spotty skin. Dr Mayou says, however, that light, oil-free foundations won't hurt. Decléor's Double Action Tinted Concealer (£15, decleor.co.uk) purifies and dries out blemishes. Bobbi Brown's Blemish Cover Stick (£15, bobbibrown.co.uk) with oil-absorbing kaolin is another of my favourites for calmly stifling zits.