

# acne treatment THAT'S Light Years Ahead



BY DIMA ALI, M.D.

I was in the 5th grade when I got my first zit. It was big, red, right in the middle of my forehead with just a hint of yellow in the center. I thought my brains were about to ooze out! No wonder they call it ACNE VULGARIS, right?? My friends, still unfamiliar with the pimpled face, asked: "What is that big thing on your face? You should go to the nurse's office! Does it hurt?"



"It's me acne Doc, it's gettin' so's i'm feelin' too ashamed to go out"

Patients find it hard to believe that I used to have acne but, indeed, I didn't just have acne – I had an entire assortment of acne (beyond the scope of this article).

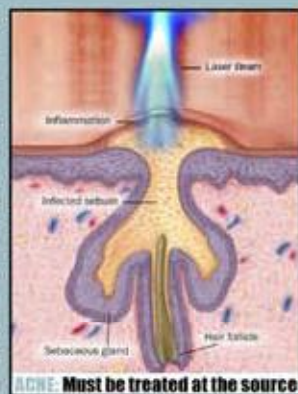
Despite the shame and embarrassment of the transformation my skin was undergoing, I was hopeful. In fact, it posed a challenge and I became determined to prevail over the invaders of my once clear, soft skin. My mother took me to the local drugstore and we stocked up on all sorts of acne soaps and well marketed tubes with ingredients like "benzoyl peroxide" and "salicylic acid." I just knew these powerful substances would wipe the raging pimples off my face once and for all. Well, at least that's what was supposed to happen.

By the time I was in college, my battle with acne had worn me out and had left depressed "tread marks" where acne cysts once dwelled. So, even on a good day when I only had a few zits, the ravages of war were still a constant reminder. By now, there were new prescription creams and magic pills and potions out on the market. Retin-A, FDA approved in the early 70's, was becoming increasingly popular as was

Accutane. I had tried them all and suffered all the side effects without achieving the clear, blemish free skin for which I yearned.

## IT'S BETTER NOW.

Fortunately, acne treatment has come a long way in the last decade. It is estimated that about 17 million people in the U.S. have some form of acne. Many teens and adults who suffer from this physically and psychologically devastating condition have turned to the latest in laser technology and light-based treatments. LASER, or Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation, can target the root cause of acne--the overactive sebaceous gland and the resulting overgrowth of bacteria. Laser treatment of acne and the often disfiguring acne scarring can be addressed successfully with minimal down-time and without the side effects of common prescription oral and topical medications. Improvement can be seen even after one or two treatments. With additional treatments, the atrophic scarring (often referred to as "moon craters on my face,") start to become less noticeable due to increased collagen production. PDT, or Photodynamic Therapy, is also an effective option for the treatment of acne and is becoming increasingly popular as a treatment of pre-cancer and skin cancer prevention.



MYTH: Acne is caused by eating chocolate or junk food

How does a treatment feel? Depending on the light source used, it ranges from zero discomfort to the sensation of a "rubber band snap." Sometimes topical anesthetics are used to minimize discomfort but, with built-in cooling devices, the procedure is tolerated well by most people without any sedation necessary.

So, if you've been around the block with over-the-counter and prescription acne treatments without much success, don't surrender: consider laser based-treatments. In the right hands, it's a safe and effective alternative and light years ahead of traditional treatments.

In closing, whether you have acne or not TAKE CARE OF YOUR SKIN! It's the largest organ of your body. It protects you, helps regulate your temperature, keeps you from getting dehydrated and, last but not least, carries all those sensory nerve endings that allow us to have a sense of touch!