

your starter guide to
CLEAR SKIN



BEFORE

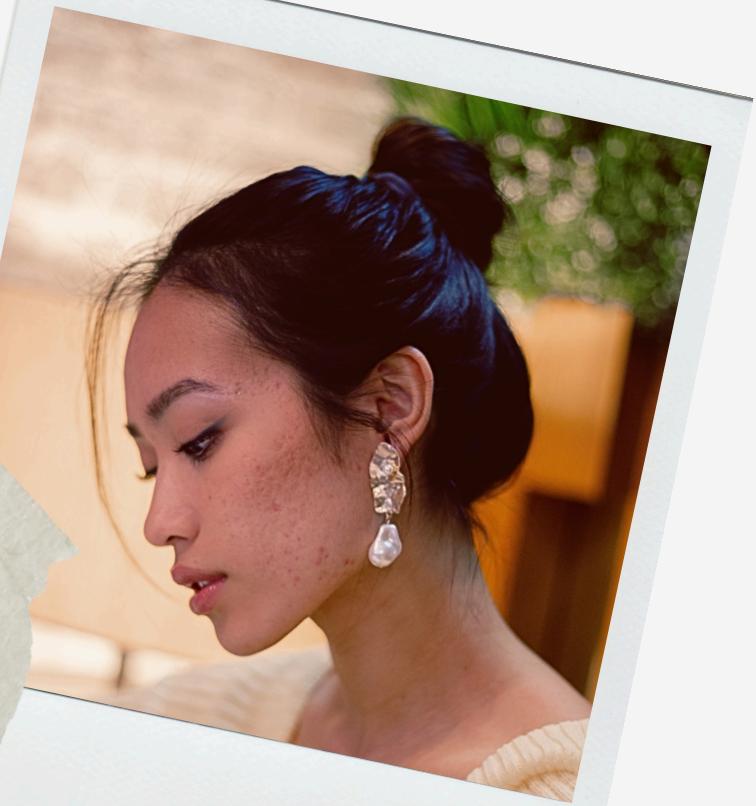


AFTER

HOW TO HEAL YOUR ACNE FROM THE INSIDE OUT

BY SHINY LIU

nation, allowing artists to reach global audiences across borders. Virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and other's perspective, to experiences and challenging traditional notions of ownership. This duality makes art individual and foster innovation. Art's relationship with technology is a testament to the power of imagination and the potential for art to transform the world.



MY STORY

It all began when I was twelve.

Small red bumps appearing on my face, the kind everyone said would eventually go away. They were wrong. It followed me persistently into my teens, twenties, alongside developing eczema.

My entire life revolved around my skin struggles. It chipped away at my confidence, but in an unexpected way, it also became my greatest teacher. It forced me to listen, to pay attention, to understand my body beyond the surface.

I've always believed that skin is a reflection of what's happening within. That belief is why I chose not to take Accutane, and instead committed to healing from the inside out.

After over a decade of trial and error, becoming a health coach, and working closely with a functional practitioner, my acne began to clear. I feel like I could finally breathe.

Discovering functional lab testing was the turning point — it brought clarity, connected the dots, and gave me agency over my healing.

I know how isolating this process can feel, which is why I've brought everything I've learned into one place.

This guide is meant to be a starting point to help you better understand your body and approach healing with confidence because you deserve to feel at home in your skin.

PART I: A NEW WAY TO LOOK AT ACNE

ACNE IS OFTEN TREATED AS A COSMETIC ISSUE,
BUT IT IS ACTUALLY A HEALTH ISSUE.

If you are reading this, you've likely tried many approaches. Skincare routines, diets, supplements, prescriptions, facials, or lasers may have helped temporarily, but they didn't create lasting change.

Lasting improvement comes from understanding the root cause of your acne. Beyond skincare, acne is often influenced by internal systems such as nutrient absorption, your nervous system, immune function, hormones, and gut health. Your skin is an extension of your body. What shows up on the outside is often a reflection of what is happening internally.

You might wonder why someone else can eat poorly and never break out, while you do. The answer is simple: everyone is different. Everyone has a unique genetic makeup and a different threshold for stress and imbalance. For some people, imbalance shows up as fatigue, digestive issues, or mood changes. For others, the skin becomes the outlet.

With that in mind, two truths about clear skin exist at the same time:

There are foundational habits that benefit almost everyone. Supporting your body with nourishing food, stress management, and quality sleep all create the baseline environment it needs to function well. Strengthening these basics alone leads to noticeable improvement.

At the same time, every body is unique and begins from a different starting point, making personalization especially important.

This guide shares the foundational principles that apply to most people and help create a strong starting point.

ACNE ECOSYSTEM

nervous system regulation

diet

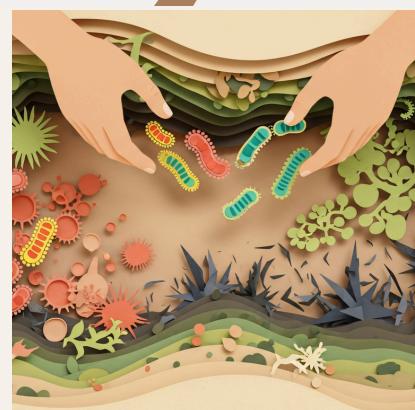


mood



blood sugar balance

hormones



gut health

skincare

PART 2: NERVOUS SYSTEM REGULATION



NERVOUS SYSTEM REGULATION REFERS TO HOW SAFELY
YOUR BODY FEELS MOVING THROUGH LIFE:
PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY, SPIRITUALLY.

When the nervous system feels safe, the body can digest food, absorb nutrients, regulate hormones, lower inflammation, and repair tissue, including the skin. Nervous system regulation is shaped by both big life events and the small, repeated habits that follow.

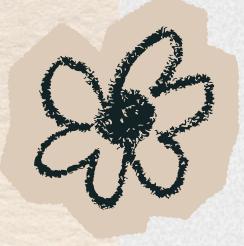
Major stressors like a job loss, moving, a breakup, illness, or significant life transitions can strongly activate the nervous system and push the body into survival mode. In these moments, digestion slows, inflammation increases, hormones fall out of balance, and skin repair is deprioritized.

What determines whether the body stays stuck in that state is what happens day after day afterward. Much like rock formations are shaped by water dripping slowly over years, the nervous system is shaped by the pace of your daily life. Rushing through tasks, multitasking, eating quickly, constant stimulation, poor sleep rhythms, or ongoing self-criticism can keep the body activated long after the initial stress has passed.

Slowing down daily rhythms is one of the most effective ways to support regulation. Over time, these small, consistent habits reduce internal stress, lower inflammation, and create the conditions where the skin can repair itself.

Energetically, chronic dysregulation often develops when you are living out of alignment with your needs, values, and boundaries. This can look like staying in a relationship that no longer feels safe or nourishing, overcommitting to obligations that drain you, or repeatedly saying yes when your body is asking for no.

Even when the mind rationalizes or pushes through, the body continues to register these moments. Over time, unexpressed stress, resentment, and emotional suppression accumulate in the nervous system.



WAYS TO REGULATE YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Make space for activities that bring joy without productivity attached
- Notice and address relationships that feel misaligned or draining
- Create a calming wind-down routine before bed
- Practicing grounding activities such as breathing, journaling, or stillness
- Reduce multitasking and rushing through tasks
- Incorporate daily movement and exercise
- Surround yourself with friends and family that make you feel safe
- Setting boundaries that protect your energy and time
- Schedule intentional breaks instead of pushing through exhaustion
- Reducing constant screen exposure and background stimulation
- Speak kindly to yourself
- Allowing yourself to rest without needing to earn it

If your healthy habits don't seem to be making much of a difference, hormone testing can help identify imbalances for a more customized plan.

For example, if testing shows elevated cortisol, it gives you clear direction: pause high-intensity workouts and lean into gentler movement while your body recalibrates and hormones come back into balance.

PART 3: GUT-SKIN AXIS



YOUR GUT AND YOUR SKIN ARE DEEPLY CONNECTED.

Many people with acne believe their gut health is “fine” because they do not experience severe digestive symptoms. You probably don’t realize that these symptoms count as signs of digestive imbalance because they are common:

Common signs of underlying digestive imbalance may include:

- Bloating after meals
- Irregular bowel movements
- Low energy, brain fog, or persistent fatigue
- New or worsening food sensitivities
- Chronic or recurring skin issues

For some people, acne is connected to specific imbalances in the gut. This can include too much of certain bacteria, infections, yeast, parasites, or not enough beneficial bacteria. When the gut is out of balance, it doesn’t work as efficiently as it should.

When the gut is out of balance, it can struggle to properly break down food and absorb the nutrients your body needs. At the same time, the gut lining can become irritated and weakened. This allows inflammatory substances to pass into the bloodstream, which places extra stress on the immune system and increases inflammation throughout the body.

Even if you’re eating well, your body may not be fully absorbing the vitamins, minerals, and nutrients it needs. Over time, this can lead to nutrient gaps that affect skin repair, hormone balance, and energy levels.

At the same time, the gut plays an important role in clearing hormones from the body. When digestion is sluggish or inflamed, hormones like estrogen and stress hormones may not be cleared properly and can build up. This hormonal backup can increase inflammation and oil production, causing more breakouts.



WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR

GUT HEALTH

- Eat a wide variety of foods for a diverse gut microbiome
- Minimize packaged/processed foods with long ingredient lists and added sugars
- Avoid rushed meals to help digestion work more effectively
- Reduce alcohol intake
- Include fiber-rich foods daily such as vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains
- Eat enough protein to support gut repair
- Include complex carbohydrates like rice, potatoes, oats, quinoa, and root vegetables
- Avoid excessive liquid intake during meals that hinders digestion
- Be mindful with random supplements
- Reduce iced drinks if digestion feels sluggish
- Avoid constant snacking throughout the day to give your digestive system breaks
- Cut out sugary drinks and snacks



If your healthy habits don't seem to be making much of a difference, gut health testing can help identify hidden imbalances.

For example, you could be eating well, but if there is an infection or imbalance in the gut, your body may not be properly absorbing nutrients. In other cases, you might react to foods that are generally considered healthy because the gut is irritated or out of balance. Testing helps uncover these issues so support can be targeted and effective.

PART 4: MINERAL DEFICIENCY



YOUR SKIN REFLECTS WHAT YOUR BODY

HAS THE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT.

Minerals are important for healthy skin because they help control things like inflammation, oil production, hormones, immunity, stress, and skin healing. They act like helpers and messengers in the body, making sure signals get sent where they need to go. When you don't have enough of the right minerals, these signals don't work properly.

Not all minerals affect the skin the same way. Some have a direct effect on acne and healing, so imbalances show up quickly on the skin. Others affect the skin indirectly by influencing stress levels, digestion, blood sugar, and overall balance inside the body. Sodium, potassium, and magnesium are generally considered the safest electrolytes for daily use when taken in balanced, low-to-moderate amounts.

Minerals also work together, not on their own. Taking a lot of one mineral can throw others off. For example, too much zinc can lower copper, too much iron can increase inflammation, and too much selenium can be harmful. This is why taking random supplements or staying on high doses for a long time often doesn't fix the problem.

Mineral deficiencies are very common, even if you eat well. Stress uses up minerals quickly, digestion issues can make them harder to absorb, low stomach acid makes them harder to break down, and blood sugar ups and downs increase mineral loss. Over time, this can lead to imbalances without you realizing it.

When minerals are low, the body focuses on survival first. Important organs get what they need, and things like skin repair get pushed aside.



WAYS TO SUPPORT MINERAL BALANCE

- Eat balanced meals with protein, fiber, and carbohydrates to support mineral retention
- Support digestion by eating slowly, chewing well, and not eating in a rushed or stressed state
- Avoid caffeine on an empty stomach, which can increase mineral loss
- Stay hydrated, but don't overdo plain water without food or electrolytes
- Choose gentle movement during periods of fatigue or high stress to reduce mineral burn
- Prioritize sleep, since mineral repair and storage happen during rest
- Take daily low dose electrolytes
- Be cautious stacking supplements that contain overlapping minerals



When symptoms are ongoing, repeat in patterns, or don't improve with foundational habits alone, testing helps move you out of guesswork and toward a more targeted, safer approach.

Lab testing helps achieve faster, more definitive results by clearly identifying what to support instead of relying on trial and error.

Instead of staying on supplements indefinitely, testing allows you to correct imbalances, reassess, and eventually rely more on food and lifestyle for long-term balance.

PART 4: SKINCARE ROUTINE



WHEN IT COMES TO SKINCARE, LESS IS MORE.

A simple routine built around the basics is usually enough to support healing. This means focusing on a gentle cleanser, a targeted treatment, and a moisturizer with sunscreen during the day.

When skin is breaking out or inflamed, it's often already stressed and overwhelmed. Adding too many active ingredients, harsh treatments, or constantly switching products can damage the skin barrier. Once the barrier is compromised, inflammation stays elevated, healing slows down, and breakouts are more likely to continue.

Instead of aggressively trying to “treat” acne, prioritizing barrier support and hydration often leads to better, longer-lasting results. When the skin barrier is supported, the skin can calm down, regulate itself, and repair more effectively. Simplicity gives the skin the space it needs to recover.

It's also important to remember that many skincare and makeup products contain ingredients that can clog pores, especially for acne-prone skin, so it is important to check the ingredients of all of your products.

Sample Simple Skincare Routine

- Gentle cleanser
- Targeted treatment (with active ingredients)
- Moisturizer
- Sunscreen (SPF 30+) during the day

Consistency matters just as much as product choice. Skin needs time to respond, and frequently changing products makes it harder to tell what's actually helping. Giving a simple routine several weeks allows inflammation to settle and the barrier to strengthen.

ACNE SKINCARE TIPS

- Introduce one new product at a time so you know what's helping or hurting
- Remove makeup fully every night to prevent clogged pores
- Wear sunscreen daily to prevent inflammation, scarring, and post-acne marks
- Use a sulfur spot treatment for inflamed breakouts
- Avoid over-cleansing (twice a day is enough)
- Give your skin breaks from makeup whenever possible to reduce congestion
- Check all ingredients in your skincare and makeup to make sure they don't clog pores
- Use salicyclic acid on active breakouts
- Avoid picking or squeezing breakouts to reduce inflammation and scarring
- Focus on supporting your skin barrier + hydration



if you're tired of guessing and unsure how to build a skincare routine or if yours is good, having a knowledgeable professional review your skincare and makeup routine can make a big difference.

For example, they can help you simplify your routine and prevent overusing actives that are potentially making your skin worse. Or give recommendations for colder conditions that require thicker moisturizing creams to protect the skin barrier. And yes, acne prone skin can still use oils - it's about choosing the right oils!



READY FOR PERSONALIZED SUPPORT?

I offer a 3-month personalized Clear Skin Program to help you stop guessing and start seeing real progress. You'll receive guided support, personalized routines, and access to functional lab testing, so your plan is based on your body, not trial and error.

LEARN MORE & APPLY

click here!

stress, and discover an intimate connection between creativity and well-being. beauty and aesthetics, an exploration of While beauty is subjective and culturally intricate details of a handcrafted piece of furniture, or the well-composed song, art enriches our daily lives. The value of art is immeasurable, yet it often struggles to find support. Many artists face financial instability, and the arts are frequently vulnerable to budget cuts. Despite the challenges, the arts continue to be a vital element of our society.