

Erase Your Ugly Scars (Best Treatments!)

by Dr. Nicholas Perricone - Special To eDiets

One of the most difficult challenges that we dermatologists must contend with is finding effective treatments for scars. Acne, for example, can cause both scarring and pitting that can last a lifetime.

This is why it is so important to halt the beginnings of acne lesions before they turn into full-blown papules or pustules. This means fighting the inflammation that results in the acne lesion on a cellular level -- even better, preventing the inflammation right from the start.

You may be thinking to yourself, "Why is this so important?" After all, what's the big deal about a few pimples, really, other than the insult to our vanity?

The fact is that if acne is allowed to continue unchecked, being treated only when it becomes visible, the invisible inflammation at the cellular level results in white blood cells surrounding the follicle to destroy tissue. Once this tissue is broken down and repaired by the body, we end up with either atrophic scars (deep, indented scars resulting from collagen loss) or hypertrophic scars (bumpy scars made up of an excess of collagen).

Even worse, very large lesions may result in huge scars known as keloids, which are extremely difficult to treat. The good news is that, armed with a little knowledge, we can prevent acne lesions from ever reaching this stage. As my readers know, acne is an inflammatory disease. Therefore, to successfully prevent and treat acne, we must adopt strategies proven to reduce inflammation in the body. This means following the anti-inflammatory diet and taking nutritional supplements, such as anti-oxidants, which have powerful anti-inflammatory properties. Of equal importance is the twice-daily application of topical anti-inflammatories after a thorough but gentle cleansing.

One of my most exciting discoveries came about almost by accident. Several years ago, I met with Rebecca, a new patient interested in starting an anti-aging regimen. At 34 years of age, Rebecca was already a top editor at a highly regarded beauty and fashion magazine. In fact, we had met when she interviewed me for a feature story on my first book, *The Wrinkle Cure*.

Although Rebecca did not have loss of skin tone or deep wrinkles, fine lines were beginning to appear in the eye area. She was also losing that radiance and bloom of youth that characterizes the skin of women in their teens and twenties. I started Rebecca on a regimen of topical antioxidants with an emphasis on two of my favorites: alpha lipoic acid and DMAE. I recommended that Rebecca apply [Alpha Lipoic Acid Face Firming Activator](#) to her face and neck morning and evening.

At our follow-up appointment six weeks later, Rebecca was bubbling with happiness. "You will not believe this Dr. Perricone," she enthused. "Everyone is raving about my skin -- and that's not all. The linear scar that was under my eyebrow has all but disappeared!"


Inspired by Rebecca's success, I speculated that this combination of alpha lipoic acid and DMAE may help in the treatment of the scars and pitting of the skin that can occur from acne. I conducted several studies in my office with very satisfying results. Since that time, alpha lipoic acid's ability to greatly diminish the appearance of scars has been tested many times.

Studies have been completed showing that alpha lipoic acid indeed can prevent and reverse scar formation. A double-blind, placebo-controlled study by plastic surgeon D. G. Genecov, M.D. and his group applied a lotion containing both alpha lipoic acid and DMAE twice daily to the scars generated by cleft lip palate surgery on the upper lip of children. The children's parents applied the cream twice daily, not knowing whether it was an inactive base or the cream containing alpha lipoic acid. After one year, the results revealed that those receiving [the alpha lipoic acid -- DMAE lotion](#) had much diminished scar formation. Their lips appeared almost normal, as opposed to those receiving the placebo.

This study is important, because it illustrates that we can prevent serious scarring and the accompanying deformity without resorting to invasive procedures that may provide only marginal results. Thanks to studies such as these, I believe this powerful alpha lipoic acid/DMAE combination will be used on a regular basis in the future to help prevent and treat scar tissue.

It is not surprising that alpha lipoic acid would work on scars as well as wrinkles -- and here's why:

Alpha lipoic acid stops the activation of NF kappa B, thereby suppressing the inflammatory response within the cell. In addition, alpha lipoic acid also controls a transcription factor called AP-1. AP-1 is activated when a cell is under oxidative stress -- that is, when there is an excess of free radicals and not enough protection from antioxidants. Once activated, AP-1 heads straight for the nucleus of the cell,



where it activates the genes that control the production of enzymes that can digest collagen. This digestion of collagen is actually one of the causative factors in the birth of a wrinkle.

It is also important to note that alpha lipoic acid exerts an even greater action on AP-1, and it is this: You see, while AP-1 can be activated by destructive free radicals, it can also be activated by alpha lipoic acid! On the face of it, this does not sound like good news. However there is a significant difference in its effects, depending on what activates AP-1. When AP-1 is activated by alpha lipoic acid, the enzymes activated by AP-1 digest only damaged collagen. Because scars are made up of damaged collagen, alpha lipoic acid can actually reverse existing scar tissue.

A discussion on scars is an ideal place to dispel a very common myth in dermatology. And, that is that patients with a darker complexion (ave less sensitive skin than the lighter skinned northern Europeans. Actually, the reverse is true! One of the biggest problems plaguing African American skin is a hyper-inflammatory response in the skin to the slightest injury. Thus a single acne lesion will often result in the formation of an atrophic (indented) scar or a hyper-trophic or keloid scar larger than the actual lesion itself.

This occurs because the cellular response to injury in African Americas results in the greater production of pro-inflammatory chemicals and collagen damaging enzymes. I strongly advise my African American patients to fully embrace the anti-inflammatory lifestyle. I also recommend they use a topical alpha lipoic acid/DMAE combination to prevent the appearance of scarring, a gray or ashy appearance and uneven pigmentation.

When it comes to scars on the body, whether they be from acne (the upper back and shoulder area is particularly susceptible) or from an injury or trauma, I have had excellent results with a substance known as [Polyenylphosphatidyl Choline. Phosphatidyl-E with Tocotrienols HAND AND BODY](#). This highly emollient and soothing substance is derived from lecithin (a natural food substance) and possesses anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. When combined with DMAE and applied to scars topically in a penetrating base, the results are very satisfactory -- and continued applications result in a significant diminishment in the appearance of the scar.

If your goal is to keep your skin as young and supple as possible and diminish the appearance of unsightly scars along the way, [topical alpha lipoic acid/DMAE combination](#) could be what you are looking for. Best of all, because alpha lipoic acid is known as the "universal antioxidant," it is the ideal treatment for complexions of all colors, tones and types.

As always I welcome your comments, letters, emails and photos.

Warm regards,
Nicholas V. Perricone

Nicholas Perricone, MD, FACN, is a board certified clinical and research dermatologist. Dr. Perricone holds dozens of U.S. and international patents for the treatment of skin and systemic disease, and for the use of topical anti-inflammatories for reversing and preventing damage to the skin caused by factors such as age, the sun, the environment and hormonal changes. He is the author of two #1 New York Times best sellers, *The Perricone Prescription* and *The Wrinkle Cure*. His most recent book is *The Acne Prescription* (HarperCollins).