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**MONICA
REINAGEL:**

Hi, everybody. This is Monica Reinagel, and you're listening to *The Nutrition Diva-- Quick and Dirty Tips for Eating Well and Feeling Fabulous*. Lots of you have emailed and phoned with questions about diet and acne. So today, we're going to talk about whether what you eat can make a difference in your complexion.

There are a lot of old wives' tales about how certain foods can cause acne, such as chocolate, potato chips, or pizza. Conventional dermatologists, on the other hand, are more likely to tell you that there is no link at all between diet and acne. I think the truth is probably somewhere in between. There's some new evidence that certain foods may be linked to acne, but it looks as if we've been focusing on the wrong foods. It turns out that chocolate and oily foods don't seem to affect acne, but refined carbohydrates and dairy products just might.

The evidence against dairy is chiefly based on epidemiological studies. That means that when we look at big groups of people and what they eat, there seems to be a correlation between dairy and acne. Specifically, we see that people who eat less dairy seem to have less trouble with acne. Now in nutrition, this is the equivalent of a smoking gun. It doesn't definitively prove anything, but it gives you an idea where to look for the bullet.

The next step would be a controlled trial. For example, we could take a big group of people that have acne and have them stop eating dairy, but keep everything else exactly the same. And then we'd see if it made a big enough difference in their symptoms that we could be sure that it wasn't due to chance or to placebo effect.

You don't have to wait for the researchers to get this organized, though. If you're frustrated with acne, you can do an experiment of one. If cutting back on dairy improves your acne, you've got your answer. If avoiding dairy does make a difference for you, it doesn't mean that you can never eat dairy again, by the way. It's possible that after several weeks or months, you can gradually reintroduce dairy products to your diet without triggering breakouts.

Instead of or in addition to cutting back on dairy foods, there's something else you can try. Dr. Loren Cordain, among others, argues that a diet high in refined foods is the main culprit in acne. This theory's been tested in a couple of small trials, where people avoided sweets, highly-processed foods, and refined carbohydrates like bread, baked goods, and other things

made with white flour. Instead, they ate a whole foods diet, including lots of fruits, vegetables, protein, and healthy fats, and it worked. Their acne improved, and they also lost weight.

Now, most of the subjects were delighted by this outcome. But actually, this presents a bit of a problem for the researchers, because now it's hard to tell whether the improvement in acne had to do with the fact that they changed their diet or that they lost weight.

You see, a lot of Dr. Cordain's theory has to do with how a diet rich in refined foods affects blood sugar and hormone levels. But losing weight tends to affect these factors in much the same way that eating a less-refined diet does. So we have another smoking gun. Or rather, we have two smoking guns. And now researchers will have to try to figure out which one fired the bullet. The next step, for example, would be to do a big study to see if a whole foods diet improved acne even when the subjects don't lose any weight.

But once again, you don't need to wait for the researchers. Dr. Cordain is already marketing a complete program which will explain his dietary cure for acne. Before you spend that \$80, though, it might be worth doing a little experiment on your own. If you want to explore whether changing your diet might improve your acne, I think it makes sense to start by cutting back on refined carbohydrates and/or dairy products.

Not only might these changes help your skin look better, but reducing your intake of refined carbohydrates and increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables can reduce your risk of cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, and help slow the aging process, to boot. If you're lucky, you'll end up with fewer blemishes and fewer wrinkles.

If you're interested in reading more, there's a lively discussion taking place on my blog, on nutritiondata.com, involving some of the researchers that are studying this issue, as well as a lot of readers sharing their own experiences. I'll put a link to that in my show notes along with a link to Dr. Cordain's website. You'll find all of that at nutritiondiva.quickanddirtytips.com. Visit gotomypc.com/podcast for your free 30-day trial.

This is Monica Reinagel, the Nutrition Diva, reminding you that these tips are provided for your information, but aren't intended as medical advice. So please work with your health professional to determine what's right for you. If you have a comment or a question for me, you can post it on my Nutrition Diva page on Facebook, or leave me a voicemail at 206-203-1438. Have a great day everyone, and remember to eat something good for me.

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