



## **BEGINNING TOPICAL RETINOID THERAPY**

**(Retin-A, Differin, Tazorac, Tretin-X, Avage, Renova, tretinoin, Ziana, Atralin)**

There are a few things to understand about some acne medications before using them:

1. Topical Retinoids may actually worsen your acne or “break you out” more than usual for the first 1 to 3 weeks of treatment. Just continue to use it as directed and this will improve by week 4 to 6.
2. When washing your face, we recommend gentle facial soaps such as Dove, Oil of Olay, Cerave or Cetaphil rather than the more drying soaps such as Dial. Use your hands to wash, avoiding abrasive methods such as wash cloths, facial scrubs, or Buf-Pufs, etc. After towel drying your face, you should wait at least 20 – 30 minutes for your skin to dry completely before applying.
3. If you are experiencing dryness, flaking, or irritation, you may use a facial moisturizer. Be sure that it is non-comedogenic (won't clog pores). Some examples are Cetaphil Restore, Cerave AM/PM, Purpose, and Oil of Olay. The best time to apply a moisturizer is within the first minutes after washing your face, while your skin is still damp, and as often as needed during the day.
4. In the morning, it is a good idea to use a facial non-comedogenic moisturizer that contains a sunscreen with a SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of at least 15. If you are going to be outdoors during the hours of 10 am – 3 pm, you should apply a regular sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher.
5. When applying acne medications such as topical retinoids, or Benzoyl peroxide, you should apply very small amounts. An amount of cream or gel the size of a small green pea is enough to cover your entire face. Squeeze a small amount about the size of a pea, onto the palm of your hand. Use a fingertip from your other hand to “dot” the medication onto your skin then evenly spread it to cover the area lightly. Do not put it on the eyelids or the very corners of the eyes, nose, or mouth, as these areas may become very irritated. Apply at night time as the sun will inactivate the medication (generic retin-a).
6. Because topical retinoids can **prevent** new breakouts, be sure to apply it to **all** the areas where you usually break out, not just on the areas that are involved that day.
7. When starting topical retinoids, for the first time, we will sometimes advise you to start applying the medicine only every third night for the first week or so. If you are doing well at this point (not too much redness or dryness), use it every other night for the next 2 weeks. When beginning treatment, a slight amount of redness and dryness is to be expected, but should not be excessive or uncomfortable. If your skin feels too irritated to apply it more frequently, just stay at the current frequency for another 2 weeks. Eventually, your goal is to apply your medication every night.
8. If you wear make-up, be sure that the label on each product states that it is non-comedogenic (won't clog pores). This includes foundation/base, powder, blush, etc.
9. Acne medications take time to work, so don't expect to see dramatic results right away. Be prepared to use your topical retinoids for at least 3 months before you and your doctor decide whether it's working for you.

**\*\* ALWAYS stop using your acne medications if you suspect that you might be pregnant.**