

Acne affects half of people over 25 in Western countries — but it's 'basically nonexistent' in non-industrialized societies. Why?

In the [Western world](#), it's rare to find someone who hasn't faced a bout of acne at least once. [Regardless of race](#), everyone seems to succumb to this unsightly [skin](#) condition, which occurs when hair follicles [become plugged](#) with oil and dead skin cells. At [80% to 90% prevalence](#) among adolescents living in modernized countries, acne is basically a rite of passage. It persists for about half of people over age 25.

But fascinatingly, researchers have discovered that acne is essentially [nonexistent among non-industrialized communities](#).

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This isn't simply due to genetics, either. When individuals from [non-Westernized] cultures move to the U.S., Europe, Australia, industrialized parts of Asia, or pretty much anywhere where modernization has taken hold, they get acne just as much as the rest of us. This implies that a few, or many, facets of modern society predispose people to pimples. So what are these factors?...

Science hasn't pinpointed one overriding cause. Comparing how we live with how acne-free cultures live can yield insights, however.

- Our diets are much different. Particularly, acne-free peoples tend to [consume far fewer](#) refined carbohydrates and simple sugars that spike insulin levels and are devoid of fiber. Although when studies have been pooled and analyzed together, there really [isn't a clear signal](#) linking any aspect of diet to acne.
- We exercise less. Regular physical activity can lower stress, reduce inflammation, and increase blood flow to the skin, all of which can [reduce acne](#). But again, studies haven't revealed a clear link between exercise and acne.

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