

THE RISE OF SKIN ANXIETY

Hotter weather and social media pressure to have a perfect complexion can make those with a skin condition feel self-conscious



NHS England reports that half of UK adults experience a skin condition each year, meaning around 35 million are currently affected. And around 27 million (76%) of people with a skin condition say they feel more anxious about it as the weather gets warmer as more of our skin is often on display.

In addition, 77% say that social media beauty trends, such as Korean “glass skin”, increase pressure to achieve a flawless complexion, with millennials reporting the highest levels of insecurity.

Miriam Martinez Callejas, co-founder and superintendent pharmacist at Roseway Labs, believes that social media skin trends can have a damaging effect on mental health.

“The impact of social media on its users can be hugely underestimated,” she says. “More research is needed into

its psychological effects, but our research indicates it is having a notable influence on how people see themselves – especially young women. A quarter of UK adults with a skin condition said they compare themselves to people they see online.”

Around 79% of those with a skin condition say GP-prescribed or over-the-counter treatments haven’t worked for them, leading desperate Brits to spend a fortune on off-the-shelf options, which may have nasty side effects. A study by Roseway Labs, which has partnered with dermatologists to provide customised skincare for a variety of skin conditions including acne and psoriasis, found that each summer, a growing number of people are turning to alternative methods to treat long-standing skin conditions.

Here, we take a closer look at skin anxiety and the possible solutions...



Miriam Martinez Callejas

1 THE BASICS
“Skin anxiety refers to how individuals feel when they think about their skin,” explains Miriam. “This can be influenced by external factors including societal pressures to have clear skin, trends on social media and even the weather.”
“Skin conditions on parts of the body that are harder to cover up, such as rosacea which can impact faces and eczema which can affect hands, can be difficult.”

5 THE STRESS FACTOR
A flare-up of any skin condition is often preceded by stress and Dr Miriam Stoppard thinks using medicines to calm the brain can be key to calming the skin. “Without treating the psyche, we would fail to treat the skin,” she says. “This approach has influenced a medical speciality – psychodermatology. It’s now well known that stress can trigger chronic skin diseases that persist after the initial stress has gone. A psychological approach to treatment seems to work.”

2 SUN-AFFECTED CONDITIONS
Disseminated Superficial Actinic Porokeratosis (DSAP) is a condition linked to sun exposure that causes dry, scaly skin patches. They’re generally not cancerous, but there’s a 3% risk skin cancer can develop, so you need to stay vigilant. Anxiety about DSAP can heighten in the summer. While covering up in the sun offers the best protection, short-term relief has been found in cryotherapy and laser treatments. Always seek GP advice first.



3 ACNE ANXIETY
Sudocrem spokesperson Bethany Innes says, “Skin conditions like acne impact everything, from your confidence through to relationships.”
Try to maintain a consistent skincare routine to help manage acne. It takes at least 28 days to see results. And remember to protect your skin with regular applications of high SPF sun creams and a wide-brimmed hat.

4 MAKE IT PERSONAL
“For anyone who has not found the right medication for their skin condition, ‘compounded treatment’ personalised to your skin’s unique needs, may be worth looking into,” says Miriam. Private doctors can prescribe bespoke compound formulations made up of the specific ingredients required to treat complex skin conditions. They exclude unnecessary ingredients that may cause allergic reactions in some patients, as well as varying the dosage, combination of ingredients or concentration so the treatment is more targeted.

‘DSAP MADE ME AVOID GOING ON SUNNY HOLIDAYS’



Kirsty Robertson, 49, a social worker from Glasgow, shares how having DSAP has affected her confidence

“I’ve lived with DSAP for 12 years. It’s a skin condition that heightens sensitivity to UV light and can give me multiple dry, scaly rings, mostly on my arms and legs. I have one or two on my face and chest. It’s a progressive condition that worsens with even the mildest sun exposure.”

“What began as a small circular mark on my wrist gradually spread to patches on my arms and legs within a few years. The only advice I was given from doctors was to completely avoid sun exposure.”

“DSAP has impacted my life and mental health. As well as avoiding

the sun and covering up, I would avoid going on sunny holidays.

“Social media often portrays images of perfect skin, so it has influenced what I wish I could have – flawless skin. But I found a DSAP patient support group on Facebook and some were talking about a compounding pharmacy that had helped them.

“I discovered a treatment for my DSAP called 2/2 cream – a combination of 2% of two medical ingredients. It’s the only product that has really helped me. It’s not a cure, but my skin does clear up.

“Most importantly, it has improved my emotional wellbeing. I feel confident about doing things I wouldn’t have wanted to before – I now wear a bikini on the beach.

“My advice would be, don’t give up if you haven’t found something that works. Look for treatments not readily available from your GP. And join support groups with others that know what you’re going through.”

For more info on personalised medicine from Roseway Labs, visit [rosewaylabs.com](https://www.rosewaylabs.com) or speak to your healthcare professional