

HANDLE A SKIN CRISIS LIKE A PRO

If you knew everything about the skin, how would you deal with a complexion emergency? VANESSA CHIA speaks to three dermatologists to find out.



Main Photo: 123RF.com

Our experts



DR KER KHOR JIA,
consultant dermatologist,
National Skin Centre

Scenario #1 A SUDDEN PIMPLE

Dr Ker: No squeezing! Instead, I apply a topical anti-inflammatory agent such as benzoyl peroxide, or a topical antibiotic such as clindamycin. To play down the look of a zit, I use a non-comedogenic concealer that doesn't aggravate the blemish.

Dr Ang: The most important thing is not to pop the pimple, and to use a topical acne-care product such as clindamycin and benzoyl peroxide. In the case of persistent breakouts, I'd consider oral medication and/or going for blue-light therapy to help reduce the presence of acne bacteria in the skin and help treat the acne.

Dr Yuen: I use my clinic's Skinsense Acne Spot Therapy. This vitamin C-based, non-comedogenic and fragrance-free product is formulated to help reduce the redness and swelling caused by the pimple, shrink it and help it dry up faster.

Scenario #2 WAKING UP WITH A PUFFY FACE

Dr Ker: To reduce the puffiness, I wash my face with a gentle cleanser and cold water, then use a mask or put a cold towel over the face.

Dr Ang: I apply a moisturiser to soothe the skin, stay away from the sun and heat, and stop using all cosmetics. If my face is itchy as well as puffy, I'd take an antihistamine. If the puffiness does not subside in an hour or if there is any pain, itch or peeling, you should consult a doctor.

Dr Yuen: I try to do some exercise, such as swimming and going for a run. Once I get my metabolism going and work up a sweat, I notice that the puffiness disappears.

Scenario #3 GETTING SUNBURNED

Dr Ker: To speed up skin recovery, I use a gently cleanser, and apply topical steroids to the affected area twice daily. I also use a fragrance-free, ceramide-infused moisturiser – I put it in the fridge so it feels more comfortable on the skin when I apply it. In addition, I reapply the moisturiser multiple times throughout the day to soothe and hydrate the skin. I repeat this simple skincare routine until my skin recovers.

However, if the sunburn is extremely severe, a short course of prednisolone, a type of anti-inflammatory oral medication, may be needed to help the skin heal (this has to be prescribed). At the end of the day, prevention is key; I avoid excessive sun exposure and apply an SPF50 sunscreen on all exposed areas. If I'm going out into the sun, I wear a hat and appropriate clothing with ultraviolet protection factor (UPF).

Dr Ang: To soothe the pain that accompanies sunburn, I apply a generous amount of moisturiser or an aloe vera gel on the affected area. If the burn is severe, I use a topical steroid cream as well. I do not scratch or peel the skin as this can cause further damage. If the skin starts to blister, you should see a doctor.

Word Of Caution

The doctors here state that these tips are what they would do for themselves in the situation, and that it is always best to seek professional medical advice for your own skin, especially if you experience any pain or discomfort.

Dr Yuen: That usually never happens because I always protect myself with an SPF90 sunblock, and take an oral sunblock to further defend against harmful UV rays and repair DNA damage. But if I do get a bit red, I use my clinic's Skinsense Age Defy Cream to calm and heal the skin.

Scenario #4 RED, ITCHY SKIN

Dr Ker: It is important to understand the cause of the itch. There can be a variety of reasons – such as eczema, hives and even an allergic reaction to medication – and pinpointing the exact cause will determine the type of treatment required.

As a general rule of thumb, I consciously refrain from scratching the rash. I also clean the affected area with a gentle cleanser and apply topical steroids if needed, together with a moisturiser. If necessary, I'd take antihistamines to relieve the itch.

Dr Ang: I apply a lot of moisturiser, preferably one that is fragrance-free to prevent any further aggravation to the skin, followed by a hydrocortisone cream, a type of steroid cream often used to combat mild inflammatory skin conditions. In addition, to avoid discomfort, I stay out of the heat and sun, and avoid situations where I may perspire. I also use a gentle cleanser and cool water to wash my face, and refrain from scratching. If the itch is severe, taking an antihistamine can help.

Dr Yuen: I apply a mild steroid cream (this has to be prescribed by a doctor) on the affected area(s) for a couple of days to calm and soothe the skin. **SH**