**What Are Milia and How Do They Differ From Acne?**

Not all white bumps are acne. If you’ve ever developed a milium cyst, you quickly realize these small, pesky bumps are infinitely more difficult to remove than whiteheads or other acne bumps. Many patients try to squeeze them out but ultimately fail (and instead make matters worse from the trauma of picking).

Don’t let these small yet stubborn cysts frustrate you. A lot can be done to treat and prevent milia, but first, one needs to understand what they are and why they occur.

**What are milia?**

Milia is the the medical term for small, keratin-filled cysts that can be seen in all age groups. These cysts can be solitary (milium) or appear in clusters (milia). They are most commonly seen in infants as tiny, firm, whitish bumps on the cheeks or around the nose and eyes. Nearly half of all infants develop them. Adults can develop milia on the face as well, including very delicate areas like the eyelids. Milia can even form on the arms or hands, especially in older patients with severe sun-damaged (think leathery) skin or those with certain acquired or genetic skin conditions associated with blistering. In all cases, however, milia are benign and treatment is not necessary since they can eventually go away on their own.

**What causes milia?**

Milia form as a consequence of the skin’s localized inability to naturally exfoliate. Dead skin cells—composed predominantly of keratin, a protein also found in hair and nails—build up underneath, causing a bump to form. Unlike acne, milia are cysts, do not form from a pore and typically do not get inflamed or develop redness or swelling.

**How do you get rid of milia?**

 **Exfoliation and Specific Serums or Cream Treatments**

Products that boost exfoliation and cell turnover keep the skin smooth and thin, thereby eradicating milia and preventing them from recurring. We recommend gentle exfoliators ***(like Dermalogica Daily*** ***Micro-foliant, Glo Facial Polish, or Murad AHA/BHA Cleanser)*** to use daily without leaving the skin overly dry or irritated. After slightly wetting your fingers, massage one of these products along your face using small circular motions. Just a few minutes are all your need to give your skin an instantly smoother feel and appearance…and remove surface cells that are trapping our pores.

Products containing glycolic acid and retinol are also fantastic milia-busters. These products are considered very safe, but some caution is needed when using these products around the eyes where skin is thinner and inherently more prone to irritation. A thin layer applied every other evening is typically sufficient to give your skin a brighter and smoother appearance. Let the product dry for ten minutes, then apply a moisturizer on top before going to bed. ***OurJan Marini Bioclear Serum is an excellent choice!***

Retinol is another milia-eradicating ingredient. Nightly use of low concentrations like found in ***Murad’s Youth Renewal Retinol Serum or Night Cream*** gently increases the skin’s cell turnover rate, revealing a fresh smooth skin texture and appearance. ***Yon-Ka Phyto 52 with powerful rosemary is a multi-functional product to help release milia – and performs many other important functions for healthy, radiant, and firmer skin.***

**Prevention**

The best course of action of course is to not get them in the first place. This is why sunscreen is critical. Sun damage is a known contributor to milia formation, so every morning routine must include application of sunscreen (at least an SPF 30). With a solid routine in place that incorporates daily sun protection, gentle exfoliation at home, and in-office extraction as needed by your dermatologist, your skin could be smooth, radiant, and milia-free!