



[Authoritative facts](#) about the skin from the [New Zealand Dermatological Society Incorporated](#).

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Azelaic acid

Azelaic acid is a natural material produced by a yeast that lives on normal skin, *Malassezia furfur* (also known as *Pityrosporum ovale*).

In New Zealand, azelaic acid is available at a concentration of 20% as Skinoren™ Cream and Acne-Derm™ Medicated Lotion.

Azelaic acid is used as a topical treatment for mild to moderate acne, and may be combined with oral [antibiotics](#) or [hormonal therapy](#). It is useful for both [comedonal acne](#) and inflammatory [acne](#).

Azelaic acid is:

- Antibacterial – it reduces the growth of bacteria in the follicle (*Propionibacterium acnes* and *Staphylococcus epidermidis*)
- Keratolytic & comedolytic – it returns to normal the disordered growth of the skin cells lining the follicle
- A scavenger of free radicals – i.e. it reduces inflammation.

Azelaic acid also helps reduce pigmentation, so it's particularly useful for darker skinned patients whose acne spots leave persistent brown marks or who have [melasma](#).

The cream should be applied to the area affected by acne initially daily, then if tolerated building up to a generous twice-daily application after thoroughly cleansing the skin.

Acne responds slowly to treatment. Some improvement should be seen after one month of using azelaic acid cream. Further improvement should occur with maximum results after six months' continuous use. Treatment may be continued safely for months or years if the acne remains active.

Azelaic acid is nontoxic and is well tolerated by most subjects. However, those with very sensitive skin or who suffer from eczema, may find it irritating to apply, resulting in a mild irritant [dermatitis](#).

Discontinue applying the cream and seek medical advice if you develop severe:

- Redness
- Scaling
- Itching
- Burning

Azelaic acid does not result in:

- Bacterial resistance to antibiotics
- Reduction in [sebum](#) production
- [Photosensitivity](#) (easy sunburn)
- Staining of skin or clothing
- Bleaching of normal skin or clothing

Although not registered in New Zealand for other skin disorders, azelaic acid cream may also be useful in the treatment of:

- Postinflammatory pigmentation
- [Melasma](#)

- [Rosacea](#)
- Lentigo maligna, a type of early [melanoma](#). Azelaic acid is not recommended for most cases of this pre-cancerous lesion; where possible, surgery should be performed.

Related information

On DermNet NZ:

- [Acne](#)

Books about skin diseases:

See the [DermNet NZ bookstore](#)

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DermNet does not provide an on-line consultation service.

If you have any concerns with your skin or its treatment, see a [dermatologist](#) for advice.

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