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Banish Maskne, Fast

Your mask may cover up blemishes, but it also causes them.

Let's be real, guys: COVID-19 has been rough. In the span of just one year, it has taken lives and livelihoods, maimed businesses and bank accounts, and ruined everything from school to sports. If you're like a lot of guys, however, there's at least one more thing that has felt the frustrating effects of the coronavirus: your skin.

The problem isn't the virus, exactly. Rather, it's the face mask that you've been wearing in order to stop its spread.

Although it doesn't happen to everyone, many guys' masks have been causing breakouts on a scale they haven't experienced since high school. Known as mask-related acne, or "maskne," such breakouts are irritating, uncomfortable and unsightly. Fortunately, they're also preventable and treatable.

What Causes Maskne?

Although there can be many underlying causes of acne, most blemishes are the result of dirt and debris: When oil, bacteria and dead skin cells accumulate on your face, they get trapped in your pores, where they create swelling, inflammation and pus.

When you wear a mask, a few things happen that can lead to clogged pores. One is friction. The constant rubbing of your mask against your face can create irritation that makes your skin vulnerable to bacteria. If you're allergic to the fabric that your mask is made of, or sensitive to the detergent in which your mask was washed, the same kind of irritation can happen. And then there's humidity. When you breathe and sweat beneath your mask, heat and moisture get trapped inside, which creates a breeding ground for acne-causing bacteria. Have a beard or mustache? Facial hair can make things even warmer and wetter — which exacerbates the problem even further.

How Can You Prevent Maskne?

If You have to wear a face covering for extended periods of time — at work, for instance — there are a few things you can do to keep maskne at bay:

- **Try a different mask:** If your mask is causing irritation, try switching things up. Maybe you're allergic to the fabric, or perhaps the shape and fit aren't quite right. Look for a soft, breathable fabric like cotton and a snug fit that won't slide around on your face. A different brand might be all that's needed to give your mug some relief.
- **Wash your cloth mask:** Some masks come pre-treated with chemicals. Washing your cloth mask before you wear it can remove any irritating finishes on the fabric. Washing it after you wear it, meanwhile — especially after sweating or exercising — will remove any invisible dirt or bacteria that have built up inside it, which can wreak havoc on your face. If you use disposable masks, throw them away after each use.
- **Take regular breaks:** According to the American Academy of Dermatology Association, you should remove your mask for 15 minutes every four hours in order to give your skin a break — provided you can be socially distanced from others when you do so.
- ***Moisturize:*** If your mask is causing irritation, dry skin might be the problem. In that case, applying a lightweight and easily absorbed moisturizer like Billy Jealousy Combination Code Face Moisturizer before you don your mask and after you take it off can make a big difference.
- **Wash your face:** Washing your face at the end of the day when you remove your mask will rinse away all the debris and impurities that collected on your skin while you were masked up. Use a cleanser with a gentle formula that's appropriate for daily use, like Billy Jealousy White Knight Gently Daily Facial Cleanser, which uses natural, non-abrasive exfoliators to gently remove excess oil and other impurities from your pores. Exfoliating a few times a week with Billy Jealousy Liquid Sand Exfoliating Facial Cleanser can also help by sloughing away dead surface skin cells.
- **Relax:** Stress can induce acne breakouts, and the pandemic has been nothing if not stressful. It's therefore important to make time for relaxation. Whether you relax by watching a movie, meditating or pumping iron, making time for yourself will yield big benefits for your skin.

How Can You Treat Maskne?

If you're too late for prevention, it's time to bring in reinforcements — namely, salicylic acid, a beta hydroxy acid that's commonly used to fight acne. Billy Jealousy's Assassin Bar None Salicylic Face Wash is the perfect salicylic acid face wash for the job. Featuring 1.9% salicylic acid that works as a non-abrasive exfoliator, it eliminates dead skin cells and bacteria, opens clogged pores, and evens the skin's tone and texture.

If you have facial hair and beard acne, be sure to keep your beard clean, too; using Billy Jealousy Beard Wash will make sure that dirty whiskers aren't making your maskne worse than it has to be.

It's important to keep moisturizing, too — although you might want to switch to a scentless product like Billy Jealousy's Assassin Intensive Face Moisturizer. Because it's fragrance-free, it's the best moisturizer for sensitive skin.

With more Americans being vaccinated against COVID-19 every day, the days of wearing face masks are hopefully numbered. For now, though, you should continue being a gentleman to your neighbors by covering up — and a gentleman to your face by keeping your skin and beard clean underneath.

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