

THE ZOE REPORT

Your Skin Faces Major Risks If You Live In These Areas

By Andrea Navarro August 17, 2016

We all want flawless skin, and many of us will go to great lengths to get it. In reality, everything from lifestyle to eating habits to (obviously) skincare routines play a huge role in how our complexion looks and feels. What we often don't take into consideration is our environment, which can actually have a major impact too if we don't take precautions. Ever had a breakout erupt out of nowhere while on a trip? Or noticed that your skin actually looks *better* away from home?

I grew up in the crowded, polluted conditions of New York City and suffered from cystic acne until my late teens. Then I went away to college in central Pennsylvania where the air is fresher and cleaner. I had zero skin problems and loved every minute of it. Upon graduating, I went back to the city and then to Los Angeles, and my skin started to act up again. I was struggling more with acne and dry skin than I did when I hit puberty. Tired of feeling insecure and helpless, I enlisted the help of Beverly Hills dermatologist and founder of SKINxFIVE [Ava Shamban, MD](#), to find out exactly why my skin didn't like urban life and what I could do about it.



"Sadly the list of environmental toxins that we need to be wary of is longer than a Siberian winter," says Dr. Shamban. "It includes polyaromatic hydrocarbons from soot and diesel exhaust, dioxins from chemicals, chlorine in water that we drink and bathe in, pesticides in our food, solvents in cleaners and phthalates in cosmetics and nail products." While that doesn't sound comforting, it's important to learn the details of what's in the air and water where you live, so you can prep your skin properly. According to Dr. Shamban, people who live in industrial areas or those with large farms

face the highest risk of skin damage. In order to deal with these conditions, you'll need to focus on more than just your skincare products. "Protection from environmental toxins can be as simple as wearing sunscreen or eating a diet rich in high-quality antioxidants. Rather than spraying your home for insects, use natural remedies, and try to bathe in natural bodies of water as often as possible," she says.

While avoiding environmental aggressors entirely is almost impossible in today's world, installing HEPA filters in your home and switching to natural house-cleaning products (try baking soda and citrus-based cleansers) is a great start. "The best way to combat their effect is through smart lifestyle choices," Dr. Shamban says.

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