

Acne may prevent people from participating in sport and exercise, says research

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Acne patients who are highly anxious about their skin condition say they are less likely to participate in sport or exercise, according to new research at the University of Bath (UK).

The study, published in the *Journal of Health Psychology*, involved 50 young to middle-aged adults recruited from a national acne support group.

As well as saying that they were less likely to participate in sport or exercise, acne sufferers who perceived their skin to be negatively evaluated by others also experienced lower self-esteem and a poorer quality of life. This pattern was similar in both men and women.

The researchers say that ‘dermatological social anxiety’ is often overlooked in studies on motivation for sport and exercise in favour of physical inhibitions.

“The skin is the most visible organ in the human body and, as such, is an important part of personal image,” said Dr Martyn Standage, a lecturer in the School for Health at the University of Bath.

“Fear of having one’s skin evaluated by others has implications for physical and social wellbeing.

“Sport and exercise activities provide many opportunities for the skin to be exposed to evaluation.

“Due to this, acne sufferers may become so anxious about their appearance that it prevents them from participating in physical activity.”

Tom Loney, the Bath PhD student who worked on the project, said: “It is well known that reduced levels of physical activity can increase the risk of developing conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.”

Mrs Alison Bowser, Acne Patient spokesperson, said: “Acne is usually a very treatable condition, but requires persistence and determination to find successful treatments.

“Untreated acne may lead to scarring and embarrassment, which in turn by lead to an avoidance of daily activities such as sport.”

The results of the study will help develop new ways to encourage acne sufferers to stay more physically active.

Source: University of Bath

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