

BONUS 1

The Product Audit Checklist

Find the products in your bathroom that are secretly triggering your acne.

By Temi Adeyemi · Skin Clarity Africa

Before You Start

Go and bring every single product you use on your face and hair. Bring them all. Your cleanser, toner, moisturiser, serum, foundation, BB cream, setting powder, primer, lip gloss, hair oil, edge control, leave-in conditioner, Vaseline, baby oil — everything.

Now you are going to check each one against this list.

Look at the back of each product. Find the ingredients list. It is usually written in very small print. On cheaper products, it might not be there at all — if you cannot find the ingredient list, that product is automatically suspicious.

This checklist has THREE parts: Part A — The Red Flag Ingredients List (check your products against these) Part B — The Product Category Guide (which product types are highest risk) Part C — Your Personal Audit Sheet (one row for each product you own)

When you find a red flag ingredient in a product, circle it. At the end of Part C, you will decide what to keep, what to remove, and what to replace.

PART A

The Red Flag Ingredients List

These are the ingredients that most commonly trigger and worsen acne.

These ingredients appear in many popular products — including products marketed specifically for acne-prone skin. Finding one of these does not always mean the product will break YOU out. But if you have been breaking out and a product contains one of these, that product is your first suspect.

GROUP 1: Pore Blockers

These ingredients sit inside or on top of your pores and block them. Blocked pores = the perfect home for a breakout.

■	Coconut Oil	Very popular. Very pore-blocking. Found in body butters, natural hair products, and DIY recipes shared online. Great for the body. Bad for acne-prone faces. If your face cream or hair product contains coconut oil, remove it from your face routine first.
■	Cocoa Butter	Common in Nigerian market creams, body lotions, and stretch mark products. Heavy and thick. Blocks pores very easily. Do not apply anywhere near your jawline or cheeks.
■	Isopropyl Myristate / Isopropyl Palmitate	Found in many foundations, concealers, and primers. Even products labelled 'non-comedogenic' sometimes contain this. If your foundation contains this, it may be causing your cheek or forehead breakouts.
■	Lanolin	A wax from sheep wool. Found in many thick moisturisers and lip products. Clogs pores and can cause allergic reactions in some women.
■	Wheat Germ Oil	Often found in 'natural' and 'herbal' beauty products. One of the highest-rated pore-blocking oils available. The word 'natural' does not mean it is safe for acne-prone skin.
■	Sodium Laureth Sulfate / Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS)	The foaming ingredient in many cleansers, face washes, and black soaps. Strips the skin barrier completely. Your skin then overproduces oil to compensate. More oil = more breakouts. Look for a cleanser that does not foam heavily.

GROUP 2: Skin Irritants

These ingredients do not block pores directly — but they irritate your skin. Irritated skin becomes inflamed. Inflamed skin breaks out.

■	Fragrance / Parfum	The single most common cause of product-triggered acne and irritation. Fragrance is a blend of up to 200 unnamed chemicals. Brands do not have to reveal which ones. If a product smells nice — that smell is almost certainly causing inflammation. Look for products labelled 'fragrance-free.' Not 'unscented' — fragrance-free.
■	Alcohol Denat. / SD Alcohol / Isopropyl Alcohol	Found in toners, astringents, and many 'oil-control' products. Dries the skin aggressively. Destroys the skin barrier. Products that leave your face feeling very tight and dry often contain this.
■	Menthol / Peppermint / Eucalyptus Oil	Makes your face feel cool and fresh — which feels like it is working. Actually irritating your skin every time you apply it. Very common in 'herbal' and 'natural' skincare products.
■	Citrus Oils (Lemon Oil, Orange Oil, Lime Oil)	Natural — but highly irritating for many skin types. Also photo-sensitising — meaning they make your skin react badly to sunlight. Do not confuse with vitamin C serum — that is a different ingredient entirely.
■	Chemical Exfoliants in High Concentrations	AHA and BHA (glycolic acid, salicylic acid, lactic acid) are helpful in the right amounts. But many Nigerian market products use them in concentrations too high for everyday use. If your skin feels raw or red after using a product, the concentration is too strong.

GROUP 3: Nigerian Market Danger Zone

These are ingredients and product types very common in Nigerian and West African markets that are either banned in other countries or known to severely worsen acne and skin health.

×	Hydroquinone (above 2%)	Found in many skin lightening and brightening creams sold in open markets. Thins the skin barrier over time. Makes skin more reactive to everything. Banned at high concentrations in many countries. If your cream came from a roadside seller with no ingredient list — stop using it on your face now.
×	Mercury (Calomel, Mercurous Chloride, Mercuric)	Still found in some whitening soaps and creams sold in Lagos, Abuja, and Accra markets. Illegal everywhere. Seriously dangerous. Signs of mercury in a product: skin clears dramatically at first, then becomes very sensitive. If this sounds familiar, stop using that product immediately.
×	Topical Steroids (Betamethasone, Clobetasol, Fluocinolone)	Found hidden in many market brightening creams under names like 'Funbact-A' or mixed products. Thins the skin with regular use. Causes a rebound breakout when you stop. This is called steroid-induced acne — and it looks like small, uniform, painful bumps all over the face. If this sounds like your skin, the Barrier Rebuild from Section 7 of the main guide is essential for you.

X	Petroleum-Based Heavy Grease (in leave-on products)	Petroleum jelly itself is fine as a barrier product used correctly. But heavy petroleum-based hair greases — like many edge controls and hair pomades — migrate from your edges and hairline onto your forehead and temples. This is one of the most common causes of forehead and hairline acne in Nigerian women.
X	Formaldehyde-Releasing Preservatives (DMDM Hydantoin, Quaternium-15, Diazolidinyl Urea)	Found in many cheap hair relaxers, conditioners, and some skin creams. Release small amounts of formaldehyde over time. Highly irritating to skin. If your scalp or forehead burns slightly after applying a product — check for these ingredients.

GROUP 4: Ingredients That Are Safe For Acne-Prone Skin

When you are looking for a replacement product, look for these ingredients. They are gentle, non-pore-blocking, and suitable for acne-prone skin.

INGREDIENT	WHY IT HELPS
Niacinamide (Vitamin B3)	Reduces oil production, fades dark spots, strengthens skin barrier. One of the best ingredients for
Salicylic Acid (0.5% – 2%)	Unblocks pores from inside. Good for blackheads, whiteheads, and oily skin. Use maximum once
Hyaluronic Acid	Adds water to the skin without adding oil. Good moisturiser for oily and acne-prone skin.
Centella Asiatica (Cica)	Calms inflammation. Good for skin that is red, irritated, and prone to cysts.
Zinc	Controls oil production and reduces inflammation. Found in some moisturisers and sunscreens.
Aloe Vera (Pure)	Calms and soothes irritated skin. The fresher the better. Available at any Lagos or Accra market.
Glycerine	Simple, cheap, effective moisturiser. Does not block pores. Found in many affordable products.
Benzoyl Peroxide (2.5%)	Kills acne bacteria. Effective for active breakouts. Use in small amounts on affected areas only. C

PART B

The Product Category Guide

Which product types are the highest risk for acne-prone skin.

Not all products are equal when it comes to causing breakouts. Some stay on your face all day. Some go on at night. Some are rinsed off. Some are left on. The longer a product sits on your skin, the more chance it has to cause a problem.

HIGHEST RISK

Foundation and BB Cream	Sits on your skin for 8-12 hours every day. If it contains pore-blocking or irritating ingredients, those ingredients are on your face all day. This is the first product to check when investigating breakouts.
Primer	Many primers contain heavy silicones and dimethicone in large amounts. Applied before everything else — so if it blocks pores, everything else is sitting on top of blocked pores.
Night Cream / Heavy Moisturiser	Applied at night when your skin is doing its repair work. If the night cream contains pore-blocking ingredients, your skin cannot breathe or repair itself properly for 8 hours.
Hair Grease / Edge Control / Pomade	Applied near the hairline. Migrates to the forehead and temples throughout the day. Most women never connect their hairline acne to their hair products.

MEDIUM RISK

Sunscreen	Many sunscreens are very thick and pore-blocking. But sunscreen is essential — especially for fading dark spots. Look for sunscreens labelled 'non-comedogenic' or mineral sunscreens with zinc oxide.
Setting Powder / Setting Spray	Powders can clog pores if they are not non-comedogenic. Check the ingredient list the same way you check foundation.
Toner / Astringent	Many older-style toners contain high alcohol content which damages the skin barrier. If your toner makes your face feel very tight — it is doing more harm than good.
Leave-In Conditioner / Hair Serum	If you apply these products near your hairline or let them touch your neck or face, they can trigger breakouts in those areas.

LOWER RISK (but still check)

Cleanser / Face Wash	Rinsed off — so less time on your skin. But if it contains SLS and strips your barrier completely, it sets up the conditions for breakouts even after it is rinsed off.
Serum (water-based)	Lower risk because they are usually water-based and absorbed quickly. Still check for fragrance and alcohol.

Lip Products

Lip gloss and balm can migrate to the skin around your mouth. If you break out specifically around your mouth, check your lip products.

What To Do With Your Results

Step 1: Remove the REMOVE products immediately.

Take everything you marked REMOVE and put it away — in a bag, in a drawer, away from your bathroom shelf. Out of sight, out of habit. Do not throw them away yet. You may want to confirm they were the problem first.

Step 2: Do not replace everything at once.

If you removed 4 products, do not buy 4 new ones the same day. Wait one week. Let your skin respond to the removal first. Then replace them one at a time, 5 days apart.

Step 3: Test your INVESTIGATE products.

For each product you marked INVESTIGATE: stop using it for 2 full weeks. Then reintroduce it for one week. Watch your skin carefully. If breakouts return when you reintroduce it — that is your answer.

Step 4: Find cleaner replacements.

When replacing a product, look for:

- Non-comedogenic label
- Fragrance-free label
- No coconut oil, cocoa butter, or isopropyl myristate
- Short ingredient list with recognisable ingredients
- No whitening or brightening claims that do not list the active ingredient clearly

Step 5: Recheck every 3 months.

Brands change their formulas without telling you. A product that was safe last year may have changed its formula this year. Do a quick ingredient check every 3 months on your most-used products.



QUICK REFERENCE CARD

The Red Flag Ingredients — At a Glance

INGREDIENT	PROBLEM	FOUND IN
------------	---------	----------

Fragrance / Parfum	Irritation, inflammation	Most products
Coconut Oil	Blocks pores	Natural creams, hair products
Isopropyl Myristate	Blocks pores	Foundations, primers
Cocoa Butter	Blocks pores	Market creams, body lotions
Alcohol Denat.	Destroys barrier	Toners, astringents
SLS / SLES	Strips barrier	Foaming cleansers
Hydroquinone >2%	Thins barrier	Brightening creams
Clobetasol / Betamethasone	Steroid damage	Market mixed creams
Petroleum hair grease	Clogs hairline pores	Edge control, pomade
Menthol / Mint Oil	Irritation	Herbal skincare
DMDM Hydantoin	Formaldehyde release	Relaxers, conditioners

A final reminder: The products you have been trusting are not the enemy. They were just not made for your specific skin. Now you know what to look for. Now you stop paying for products that work against you. Every naira you save from a product you no longer need is a naira your skin is healthier for not having.

Skin Clarity Africa · Temi Adeyemi · This checklist is for informational purposes. It is not a substitute for medical advice.