

Acne

Definition and Symptoms

Acne, also called zits or pimples, is very common. More than 80% of people have it at some time, usually as teenagers. It occurs when the skin's oil glands become plugged up. Most acne is due to hormonal changes. During the teenage years, the amount of hormones produced by the body increases. This causes the oil glands to grow larger and to make an oil called sebum. This oil spreads out over the skin, thus teenagers complain of oily skin. The mildest form of acne is blackheads, which form when the oil and dead skin cells block the skin's pores.

At times plugged material becomes trapped under the skin, air can't reach it, and whiteheads or pimples form. Pimples occur when whiteheads rupture and become reddened sores. Bacteria feed on the oil and weaken the oil gland walls. They split the fat into fatty acids, which are very irritating to the skin, and red pimples may form. If the pimples are located deeper in the skin, cysts may form.

Most breakouts occur on the face, neck and back because these are the areas of skin that have the most oil glands.

Causes and Risk Factors

People think eating certain foods causes acne. This isn't generally true, but if you think that a particular food is making it worse, try avoiding that food for 4 to 6 weeks. Eating a good balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains can't hurt and may help your complexion and your overall health.

Oily cosmetics and lotions may contribute to acne. Try using water-based cosmetics instead. If your parents had acne, you may be more prone to it because of genetic hormonal similarities.



Young women may notice a worsening of acne during their monthly periods. Acne can also be a side effect of some medication. Wearing sports equipment, i.e. chin straps, shoulder pads and

tight spandex, can also cause you to break out.

What Can I Do?

To help remove the oil you should wash your face one or two times daily. Use a mild soap and water, ***but don't scrub.*** Irritation can make acne worse. Gentle manipulation or sterile lancing of small white or blackheads is OK, but squeezing or picking at deeper lesions may increase the inflammation, the blemishes, and the risk of scarring.

For make-up, use products that are water-based, oil free or have the word "non-acnegenic". If you spend a lot of time on the phone, keep the receiver clean of makeup and skin oils, and wash your hands regularly.

Treatment and Prevention

Acne can be treated in different ways. The main thing to remember is that it will take about 2 months of treatment before your skin starts to look better.

Some lotions and creams found in your local drugstore can help considerably, especially ones that contain salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide.

BENZOYL PEROXIDE (Clear by Design, Oxy-5) clears up acne for many people. You can get it without a prescription and it comes in gel, lotion, cream or pad form.



Before using benzoyl peroxide, gently wash the skin with soap and water. Blot the skin dry and begin with a 2.5% to 5% gel, lotion or cream. Spread over the whole affected area (don't just dab it onto each blemish). Use once a day at bedtime. Your healthcare provider may suggest using it once a day then work up to 2 x daily. If benzoyl peroxide is irritating your skin, decrease the frequency of use or use a lower strength.

ANTIBIOTICS can be very effective for acne. Available by prescription, they can be taken by mouth or used in a lotion, cream or gel on the skin.

Some antibiotics like tetracycline have not been proven to be safe in pregnancy. Always check with your healthcare provider or pharmacist before using.

ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES can improve acne for many women. The overall hormonal effect of the pill helps prevent acne from forming. Some brands make help complexion in some women, but worsen it in others and vice-versa.

TRETINOIN and ADAPALENE (Retin-A, Differin) are prescription creams, gels, and solutions that can be effective in treating comedonal acne consisting primarily of black and whiteheads. They are available in several different strengths and are usually rubbed onto the skin once a day. At first, these medications may seem to be making your complexion worse, but you need to continue for several weeks to see the good effects.

If you use tretinoin or adapalene, stay out of the sun or use a strong sunscreen as they increase your risk of getting a very bad sunburn.

In addition, these drugs have not been proven to be safe in pregnancy and should not be used if pregnancy is a possibility. This is due to the potential risk to the fetus.

ISOTRETINOIN (Accutane) is a prescription pill that is sometimes used to treat severe cystic or nodular acne that hasn't gotten better with other treatments. It has proven effective in treating severe cystic acne and in preventing scars. Typically, it's taken by mouth for 15-20 weeks.

Isotretinoin is quite expensive and requires periodic blood testing of liver function and lipids.



Isotretinoin can cause serious side effects, such as birth defects and miscarriages. It should never be taken during pregnancy or even one month before pregnancy. Women must use birth control or not have sex while taking isotretinoin, as well as for one month before and after you start the medication. Be sure to follow your healthcare provider's directions carefully if isotretinoin is prescribed for you.

NOTE: Most acne treatments take several months to work. It is important to continue using the medication as recommended throughout the treatment period.

For More Information

<http://www.facefacts.com>

