

ACNE

Acne is a common condition in teenagers and adults. It affects up to 80-90% of teenagers. Developing an acne bump is multifactorial, meaning that several processes lead to the formation of the acne bump. Acne begins with the 'plugging' of the hair follicle. This is due to increased 'stickiness' of the skin cells of the follicle. They get shed into the pore but get stuck, and can't be released into the environment. Oil and other skin cells are also unable to be 'shed' now causing a build-up of debris in the pore. In acne, there are often an increased number of P. acnes, bacteria that naturally lives on the skin. This bacteria encourages inflammation and promotes the development of more inflammatory acne bumps. Excessive oil production is also often involved in acne formation. Oil glands are controlled by hormones in the body, thus oil production usually increases with puberty and may increase at other times of hormonal surges (i.e. pregnancy).

Given the multiple processes involved in causing acne lesions, several medications are often required to treat the different aspects of acne formation. We have developed a plan for you. It is important that you are using your medications consistently, or they will not be effective for you. If you are having trouble with one of your medications, please call our office as we would like to help you figure out a plan to continue your treatment. Also, make sure you are treating the entire affected area with your acne medication (i.e. the entire face). In most cases, we do not spot treat acne.

Even with a great treatment plan for your acne, acne usually takes several weeks to improve. Our topical medications are much better at preventing acne lesions than they are at treating your existing acne bumps. Please be patient and continue your treatment until your follow up appointment. It usually is 6-8 weeks before you start seeing some good results from your treatment. Often your acne may get slightly worse before it starts getting better. Do not give up! We will continue to work with you to get your acne better.

General Information

- Do not pick at your acne bumps. This will increase the risk of scarring. A black head is oxidized oil in the pore. It is not dirt!
- Sunlight often improves acne temporarily. However, this is not a lasting effect and we know that exposure to sunlight increases your risk of skin cancer. Several of your acne medications may also increase your sensitivity to sun. NEVER use tanning beds to improve your acne.
- Some birth control pills are helpful for acne. Birth control pills that have this indication include Ortho Tri-Cyclen, Yaz and Estrostep. These pills are approved for treatment of acne in women who desire contraception and thus are not FDA approved for acne alone. Further, other birth control pills can be just as effective for acne. All birth control pills have potential side effects and may not be an option for all female patients.

If this is something you are interested in, you can discuss this with your doctor or physician assistant.

- Some acne can be controlled by topical medications alone. Other acne is more severe and may require medications by mouth, mainly antibiotics. With oral antibiotics, the intent is to decrease inflammation and not to treat an infection. This means that antibiotics are often used for longer periods of time (at least several weeks). Unless otherwise directed, these should be continued until your next appointment.

- For adult women, there is another pill, spironolactone, that can be considered for acne not responsive to topical treatments. It is a blood pressure and diuretic pill that has been found to block some of the androgen hormones that worsen acne.

- For very severe acne or acne that does not respond to topical medications and/or oral antibiotics, isotretinoin (former brand name is Accutane), may be prescribed. This is a serious medication with many potential side effects. It must be monitored very closely.

- Many acne treatments cannot be used when a patient is pregnant or breastfeeding. Please make sure you let your doctor or physician assistant know if you are pregnant or planning on getting pregnant in the near future. We may want to prescribe certain treatments for your acne in anticipation of pregnancy. Should you become pregnant, please stop all medications immediately. You can discuss the possibility of restarting them with us, or with your OB/GYN.

- For years, we have maintained that diet did not have much of a role in causing or worsening acne. More recent evidence suggests this may not be entirely true. The bottom line is we do not know what, if any role, diet has at this time. A diet that may worsen acne includes eating a lot of carbohydrates with a high glycemic index (i.e. white bread, potatoes, sugary drinks and snacks). Instead, individuals who ate a diet with lots of protein and carbohydrates with a low glycemic index (whole wheat breads and pastas, oatmeal, brown rice) did have improvement in their acne. We agree that adhering to a healthy diet with a low glycemic index would be a beneficial life style change and may help your acne. Other foods that have been linked to acne include dairy products, especially milk. The evidence for this is not strong and dairy is an important part of obtaining adequate vitamin D and calcium levels important for building strong bones in a growing kid. We do not recommend staying away from dairy products at this time and would encourage you to make sure your teenagers are drinking the recommended amount of milk daily. There has also been some evidence to suggest chocolate may worsen acne. Again, this is not strong evidence. All of this being said, if you believe something adversely affects your acne, it is reasonable to stop that food.

Skin Care

We may recommend a specific cleanser for you to use as part of your acne treatment. If we have not recommended a specific cleanser, then you should wash your face twice a day with a mild soap or soapless cleanser (i.e. Cerave cleanser, Cetaphil cleanser, Neutrogena fresh foaming cleanser, Purpose cleanser). If we suggest you use a gentle cleanser, select a wash that is not marketed for acne. Acne cleansers often contain

benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid which may be too irritating for your skin when combined with other medications we prescribe. Acne is NOT caused from dirt on your skin. More frequent washing is not necessary and can actually strip too much oil from your skin and cause irritation (especially if you are using topical medications for acne which can already be irritating).

Almost everyone should use a moisturizer. You should look for something that is non-comedogenic, (does not clog pores) or says 'Oil-Free'. We recommend a moisturizer with sunscreen in the morning (several of our acne medications will make you more sensitive to the sun) and a moisturizer at night. There are many great products over-the-counter (Cerave lotion, Cerave AM lotion with SPF, Cetaphil lotion, Cetaphil lotion with SPF, Olay complete, Neutrogena oil-free moisture and Healthy Defense lines, Purpose lotion, Eucerin daily facial lotion, etc).

Make-up

It is okay to wear make-up. All make-up should be non-comedogenic (non-acnegenic). Make-up should be applied to clean, moisturized skin. You should try out your make-up as everyone will not like the same products. The mineral make-up lines are non-irritating, provide sun protection and work well to cover acne and rosacea skin types. We have a great mineral make-up line at our office. Our aesthetician can help you if you are interested in trying these products.

Topical Treatments

- Benzoyl Peroxide cleansers are available over the counter (Panoxyl, Clean and Clear Continuous Control, Acne Free Cleanser, and Neutrogena clear pore daily scrub are some examples) and are available in our office - wash gently as prescribed using warm water and a washcloth. These cleansers will bleach fabrics, so be careful with towels and wash cloths. In general, we recommend using a wash with 5% or less Benzoyl Peroxide. Stronger washes are more drying and do not work any better for acne.

- Salicylic Acid cleanser (such as Skinceuticals Clarifying Cleanser, Cerave SA cleanser, Neutrogena Skin clearing face wash for men, Clearasil Ultra Daily Face Wash) - wash gently once or twice daily as prescribed using warm water.

- Topical antibiotic (such as Clindagel, Cleocin-T, clindamycin, Erythromycin 2% gel, Evoclin, Clindets) - apply a thin layer to acne areas once or twice daily as prescribed.

- Combination benzoyl peroxide and topical antibiotic (such as Benzaclin, Duac, Acanya , Onexton or Benzamycin Pak) - apply a small amount to clean skin once or twice daily as prescribed. These can be applied morning or night. However, these will bleach fabrics, so make sure they are completely dry before pulling on a shirt. Also, make sure that you exercise before applying these products so that you will not sweat them onto your shirt.

- Combination antibiotic and retinoid (Veltin) - Wash your face and let it dry completely (about 5 minutes). Then apply an English pea-sized amount to your entire face, except right around the eye area. If you are using this on your chest or back, then use a slightly larger amount. Start by using this product every other night and increase to nightly use as tolerated. This medication can be used in the morning or at night. You should apply a moisturizer to your face after the medication dries (5-10 minutes). The moisturizer will also help with irritation from this product.

- Combination benzoyl peroxide and retinoid (Epiduo or Epiduo Forte) - Wash your face and let it dry completely (about 5 minutes). Then apply an English pea-sized amount to your entire face, except right around the eye area. If you are using this on your chest or back, then use a slightly larger amount. Start by using this product every other night and increase to nightly use as tolerated. This medication can be used in the morning or at night. You can apply a moisturizer to your face after the medication dries (5-10 minutes). This medication will bleach fabrics, so make sure it is completely dry before pulling on a shirt. If you are using this product at night, you may consider using an old pillowcase to avoid bleaching.

- Topical retinoid (Differin lotion or gel, adapalene cream, Retin-A Micro gel, Atralin, Tazorac cream or gel, tretinoin cream or gel) - Wash your face and let it dry completely (about 5 minutes). Then apply an English pea-sized amount to your entire face, except right around the eye area. If you are using this on your chest or back, then use a slightly larger amount. Start by using this product every other night and increase to nightly use as tolerated. This medication is usually used at night unless you have been instructed otherwise by your doctor. You can apply a moisturizer to your face after the medication dries (5-10 minutes).

- Topical Dapsone (Aczone gel)- Wash your face and let it dry completely (about 5 minutes). Then apply a small amount to your entire face (and/or chest and back as directed). You can apply a moisturizer and make-up after the medication dries (about 5 minutes). Use twice a day for the 5% gel and only once a day for the 7.5% gel.

For more excellent information on acne:

<<http://www.skincarephysicians.com/acnenet/index.html>>

<<http://www.aad.org>>