

## What is Acne?

Acne (acne vulgaris, common acne) is not just a problem for teenagers, but can effect people of all ages. Some adult women experience acne due to hormonal changes associated with pregnancy, their menstrual cycles, or starting or stopping birth control pills. On the positive side, those few individuals who have acne into their 40s may well grow out of it. Acne can appear on the skin as any of the following:

- congested pores,
- Whiteheads,
- Blackheads,
- pimples ("zits"),
- pustules, or
- Cysts (deep pimples). The pus in pustules and cysts is sterile and does not actually contain infectious bacteria.

These blemishes occur wherever there are many oil (sebaceous) glands, mainly on the face, chest, and back.

# ACNE



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## What causes ACNE?

No one factor causes acne. There are at least three contributing factors for acne: overproduction of sebum (oil), irregular shedding of dead skin cells resulting in irritation of the hair follicles of your skin, and build up of bacteria. Sebum (oil) is a natural substance which lubricates and protects the skin, and under certain circumstances, cells that are close to the surface block the openings of sebaceous glands and cause a buildup of oil underneath. This oil stimulates bacteria (which live on everyone's skin and generally cause no problems) to multiply and cause surrounding tissues to become inflamed.

Inflammation near the skin's surface produces a pustule; deeper inflammation results in a papule (pimple); deeper still and it's a cyst. If the oil breaks through to the surface, the result is a "whitehead." If the oil accumulates melanin pigment or becomes oxidized, the oil changes from white to black, and the result is a "blackhead." Blackheads are therefore not dirt, and do not reflect poor hygiene. Other pores in your skin, which are the openings of the sweat glands onto your skin, aren't normally involved in acne.

## Methods of Prevention:

- Wash acne-prone areas only twice a day. Washing removes excess oil and dead skin cells. But too much washing can irritate the skin. Wash areas with a gentle cleanser and use oil-free, water-based skin care products.
- Use an over-the-counter acne cream or gel to help dry excess oil. Look for products containing benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid as the active ingredient.
- Avoid heavy foundation makeup. Choose powder cosmetics over cream products because they're less irritating.
- Remove makeup before going to bed. Going to sleep with cosmetics on your skin can clog tiny openings of the hair follicles (pores).
- Wear loose fitting clothing. Tight fitting clothing traps heat and moisture and can irritate your skin.
- Shower after exercising or doing strenuous work. Oil and sweat on your skin can trap dirt and bacteria.
- New oral contraceptive, Yaz, may be a better contraceptive alternative for female patients with acne.

## Commonly Used Acne treatments:

- **Benzaclin Gel**– use at bedtime. Use white pillow cases, wash cloths and towels separately because benzaclin gel can bleach colors.
- **Sulfacet Lotion**– Cannot be used for patient who have allergy to sulfa drugs. Used in the morning and at bedtime.
- **EpiDuo**– Typically combined with Retin A and benzaclin peroxide. Used at bedtime.
- **Tetracycline, Minocycline, or Doxycycline** – Refrain from taking these antibiotics with dairy products for at least one hour. Do not take right at bedtime as it can cause esophageal reflux. Take with a small amount of food to prevent GI upset. Use sunscreen due to sunlight sensitivity.