



## Acne

Acne is the most common skin disorder affecting more than 80% of people at some time between the ages of 11 and 30.

### Causes

Acne is due to plugging of the oil glands (a.k.a. sebaceous follicles) with an overproduction of oil (sebum) and cells that are naturally sloughing off of the skin. This combination of events produces white heads and black heads. To make things worse, there are normal bacteria that live on our skin called *Propionibacterium acnes* that grows well on this environment and causes little, micro infections. These little areas of infection are pimples.

Acne begins in puberty when hormones stimulate your oil glands to produce more sebum (the oil that plugs your pores).

### Basic Skin Care

1. Wash your skin twice a day with a mild cleanser such as Dove. The most important time to wash is at bedtime. Avoid scrubbing your skin because it irritates the opening of the oil glands and can cause them to close.
2. Dry skin is just as bad as oily skin in terms of causing acne. If your skin is dry, use an oil-free, hypoallergenic moisturizer with sunscreen like Cetaphil.
3. Shampoo your hair daily. Long hair can make acne worse by rubbing against your skin. Also avoid hair gels, creams, and tonics. When you sweat, these substances will spread to your face and aggravate your acne.
4. Avoid Picking. Picking stops acne from healing.
5. No changes in diet are necessary. Chocolate and oily foods do not cause acne. This is a myth.

### Treatment

ACNE ALWAYS LOOKS WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER. STICK WITH EACH NEW TREATMENT FOR AT LEAST 6 WEEKS BEFORE GIVING UP!

### Topical Therapy

**Benzoyl Peroxide** – this medicine has two benefits. First, it acts as a white head and black head eliminator, as well as killing the bacteria on your skin. This agent can be very drying so start off slowly and build up gradually. Start with a thin application one time a day every other day. Recommended brand: Oxy – 5

**Tretinoin or Retinoic acid** – this medicine is made from vitamin A and also works well for black heads and white heads. Sometimes, we use this in combination with other treatments. It can be very drying. To reduce irritation, wash with a mild soap no more than 2 times a day, wait at least 20 minutes for skin to dry completely before applying this medicine. We suggest application before bedtime because the morning is usually too hectic. Your skin will burn easier in the sun when you use this medicine. It is very important to use an oil-free hypoallergenic sunscreen all the time, not just when you go outside.

**Topical Antibiotics** – this medicine is particularly helpful if your acne has advanced to large pimples with heads to them. Allergic reactions rarely occur.

### **Oral Therapy**

**Oral Antibiotics** – more effective than topical but have more side effects. Contact our office if you have severe stomach upset or if you have vaginal itching.

**Hormonal Therapy** – can be very effective in women who have already started their periods. You cannot take this medicine if you smoke cigarettes or any other product.

**Isotretinoin (Accutane)** – this is an oral form of vitamin A that can be extremely effective. This medicine has some significant side effects that can be handled relatively easily. If you are a candidate for this treatment, we will refer you to a dermatologist.