



ACNE

Acne is a disease of the oil glands (sebaceous glands) and occurs where these glands are the largest and most active (face, back, shoulders, and chest). It is usually begins at puberty, but it is not uncommon for it to begin after the teenage years, particularly in woman. There is no magic age when acne always clears up. Sometimes it can continue into the thirties or forties, or even longer. With good treatment tailored to your particular type of acne, we can achieve excellent control of the problem, but we **do not cure** acne. Sometimes, it may flare for no apparent reason.

WASHING:

Acne is not caused by dirt, and scrubbing the skin is not a part of treatment. Too much rubbing can worsen acne. Wash gently only with a soft wash cloth or your finger tips and be gentle! **No** buff puffs, loofah sponges, abrasive soaps or scrubs, etc.

ANTIBIOTICS:

Acne is not an infection. However, normal skin bacteria, which grow in the oil glands, aggravate acne. Antibiotics are commonly used to treat acne by lowering the growth of bacteria in the oil glands.

- Tetracycline – Please see handout
- Minocycline (Minocin) – Please see handout
- Erythromycin – Please see handout
- Doxycycline – Please see handout

Remember, it takes 2-4 weeks to suppress the bacteria in your oil glands after you begin antibiotic treatment. Many patients with acne make the mistake of deciding each morning whether they need their antibiotic or not, depending on how their complexion looks that day. You should not take the antibiotic in an off again/on again manner. When your acne improves, your dermatologist may lower your dose and eventually try to stop it or switch you to an antibiotic applies to the skin, rather than a pill.

DIET:

The role of diet in causing acne is unknown. Foods which have a bad reputation include chocolate, coke, dairy products, and peanut butter. If you feel strongly that something in your diet is aggravating your acne, such as hormones, birth control pills, Dilantin (a seizure medication), some psychiatric medications, INH (a tuberculosis medication), very potent vitamins and cough medicines which contain iodine or bromine. Do not take kelp pills.

PICKING AND SQUEEZING:

This will make your condition worse and cause delayed healing, skin color changes, and sometimes scarring. If you pick without thinking about it, wear cotton gloves, available in most drugstores. If you pick in front of a mirror, use willpower not to pick.

ASTRINGENTS / TONERS:

If you have especially oily areas, you can use an astringent to remove the excess oil. If your skin is dry or sensitive, avoid these products.

LARGE PORES:

Some people tend to have a grainy complexion or large prominent pores, particularly on the nose and mid-face. Unfortunately, there is nothing that can be done to change or shrink your pores.

SKIN IRRITATION:

All acne treatment applied to the skin can cause some dryness, irritation, and redness. This is especially a problem in dry, windy, and sunny climates. You can minimize irritation by applying your medication properly. Use only a small amount applied sparingly. Avoid applying the medication to sensitive areas, such as the eyes, corners of the mouth, upper lip, and the creases of the nose. If you are having an irritation problem, be sure your skin is dry when you apply your medicine. Also, a moisturizing cream, applied to wet skin is helpful if irritation persists. Your dermatologist can recommend one. If irritation is excessive, try stopping your medications for a few days, then restart slowly. If moisturizers and stopping the medication don't help, call your doctor.

CORTISONE INJECTIONS:

For deeper, inflamed lesions (nodules and cysts), these can be helpful. These injections may cause atrophy (depressions or thinning of the skin), hypopigmentation (white spots), or telangiectasias (small, dilated blood vessels). These side effects are rare and occasionally improve by themselves in time.

GREASE, OIL AND COSMETICS:

These substances, when they come in contact with the skin, can cause or aggravate acne. Remember, household oily sprays (Pledge, Endust, Fixit). Hair sprays, and some shampoos, can aggravate acne. Cosmetics may aggravate acne. Do not use cosmetics, night creams, cleansing creams, or heavy moisturizing creams, unless you check with your dermatologist, Eye liners, mascara, face powder, lipstick, eye shadow, and powder blushes usually do not cause a problem.

IMPORTANT:

Do not use any treatment for your acne unless we discuss it. It usually takes two to three months for marked improvement to occur after beginning treatment. **We do not cure acne – we only control it.** When you are much improved, if you stop your treatment, your acne will probably recur.