

What is Acne?



Acne is a disease that affects the skin's oil glands. The small holes in your skin (pores) connect to oil glands under the skin. These glands make an oily substance called **sebum**. The pores connect to the glands by a canal called a follicle. Inside the follicle, oil carries dead **skin cells** to the surface of the skin. A thin **hair** also grows through the follicle and out to the skin. When the follicle of a skin gland clogs up, a pimple grows.

How Does Acne Develop?

Sometimes, the hair, sebum and skin cells clump together into a plug. The bacteria in the plug cause swelling. Then when the plug starts to break down, a pimple grows.

There are many types of pimples. The most common types are:

- Whiteheads. These are pimples that stay under the surface of the skin.
- Blackheads. These pimples rise to the skin's surface and look black. The black color is not from dirt.
- Papules. These are small pink bumps that can be tender.
- Pustules. These pimples are red at the bottom and have pus on top.
- Nodules. These are large, painful, solid pimples that are deep in the skin.
- Cysts. These deep, painful, pus-filled pimples can cause scars.

Who Gets Acne?

The cause of acne is unknown. Doctors think certain factors might cause it:

- The hormone increase in teenage years (this can cause the oil glands to plug up more often)
- Hormone changes during pregnancy
- Starting or stopping birth control pills
- Heredity (if your parents had acne, you might, too)
- Some types of medicine
- Greasy makeup

How Is Acne Treated?

Acne is treated by doctors who work with skin problems (dermatologists). Treatment tries to.

- Heal pimples
- Stop new pimples from forming
- Prevent scarring
- Help reduce the embarrassment of having acne.

Early treatment is the best way to prevent scars. Your healthcare provider may suggest over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription drugs. Some acne medicines are put right on the skin. Other medicines are pills that you swallow. Your healthcare provider may tell you to use more than one medicine.

How Should People With Acne Care for Their Skin?

Here are some ways to care for skin if you have acne:

- Clean skin gently. Use a mild cleanser in the morning, evening and after heavy workouts. Scrubbing the skin does not stop acne. It can even make the problem worse.
- Try not to touch your skin. People who squeeze, pinch or pick their pimples can get scars or dark spots on their skin.
- Shave carefully. If you shave, you can try both electric and safety razors to see which works best. With safety razors, use a sharp blade. Also, it helps to soften your beard with soap and water before putting on shaving cream. Shave lightly and only when you have to.
- Stay out of the sun. Many acne medicines can make people more likely to sunburn. Being in the sun a lot can also make skin wrinkle and raise the risk of skin cancer.
- Choose makeup carefully. All makeup should be oil free. Look for the word "noncomedogenic" on the label. This means that the makeup will not clog up your pores. However, some people still get acne even if they use these products.
- Shampoo your hair regularly. If your hair is oily, you may want to shampoo daily

Parent/Student Information
School Age Children

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What Makes Acne Worse?

Some things can make acne worse:

- Changing hormone levels in teenage girls and adult women 2 to 7 days before their period starts
- Pressure from bike helmets, backpacks or tight collars
- Pollution and high humidity
- Squeezing or picking at pimples
- Hard scrubbing of the skin

Child's Name _____

School Nurse _____

Date _____

School _____

School Phone Number (_____) _____

