

# What is acne?

Acne is a common skin problem in teens and preteens. Acne happens when pores in the skin get clogged and irritated. This can cause blackheads, red bumps, pimples, or big lumps called cysts.

## WHAT CAUSES ACNE?

When kids start puberty, hormones change the skin. For example:

- » Extra oil on the skin
- » Dead skin cells that block pores
- » Growth of bacteria in the pores

Inflammation can also cause or worsen acne.

Lifestyle factors also have an impact on acne. Stress is known to aggravate acne, so try to get enough sleep and daily exercise. High sugar foods may make acne worse. It is also important to eat a healthy, balanced diet.

## WHO GETS ACNE?

Acne can affect anyone. It affects all skin types and all genders. It is most common in the teen and preteen years. But adults can also get acne.

## WHAT DOES ACNE LOOK LIKE?

Acne can look different for everyone. It often shows up on the face, chest, shoulders, and back. You might see:

- » Small bumps (whiteheads)
- » Black dots (blackheads)
- » Red bumps or pus bumps (pimples or pustules)
- » Big, painful lumps (cysts)
- » Scars

Acne can look different on different skin colors. In lighter skin types, you may see a lot of pink or red bumps. In darker skin types, you might see dark brown or purple bumps or spots.

When an acne bump goes away, it may leave a flat red mark or a dark spot on the skin. These spots can take months to fade.

## HOW IS ACNE DIAGNOSED?

Doctors can usually tell if you have acne just by looking at your skin. They will ask about your symptoms and any treatments you have tried. Most of the time, no tests are needed for children with acne.

## ACNE TREATMENT TIPS

When applying acne treatments to the face, use the "5-dot" method. Take a small pea-sized amount. From that small bit, place dots of cream in each of 5 locations of your face: mid-forehead, each cheek, nose, and chin. Then rub in. You should not see a "film" of the medication on your skin; if you do, you're probably using too much.

Topical medications may lead to dryness where you use them. This almost always improves as your skin gets used to the medication (about 2-3 weeks). Some tips to help during this time:

- » Try using a little less for each treatment.
- » Wait 15-20 minutes after washing before applying the topical medications.
- » If needed, apply every other day for the first few weeks. Gradually work up to every day.
- » If very dry, skip one day, but then restart the medication.

Taking oral medications with food often helps with symptoms of upset stomach.

## HOW IS ACNE TREATED?

There are many ways to treat acne. Your doctor will help you choose the best treatment for you.

Most acne treatments work by preventing new pimples. This means that treatments take about 2 months to start working. It is important to keep using them regularly to see the results.

Here are some common treatments for acne:

### CLEANSERS

Clean your skin daily with soap to remove oil and dirt. Always remove makeup and sweat as soon as possible with soap and water. Your doctor may suggest a gentle cleanser or medicated cleansers with ingredients like:

- » salicylic acid
- » benzoyl peroxide
- » sulfur

### TOPICAL CREAMS, LOTIONS, OR GELS

These are usually applied daily to prevent acne. Make sure to use these medications consistently. Remember, they take 2 months to start working. Topical acne treatments include:

- » **Retinoids** (like adapalene, tretinoin). Retinoids prevent new acne by clearing pores, removing oil, and evening out skin texture.
  - o *Tip:* Apply at night, as these are inactivated by sunlight.
  - o *Tip:* These can increase your skin's sun sensitivity and cause dry skin. A light lotion can help with dryness.
- » **Antibiotic lotions** (like clindamycin). These reduce redness and kill bacteria.
- » **Anti-hormone creams** (like clascoterone). These reduce the effects of hormones on oil glands.

### ORAL MEDICATIONS/PILLS

Some people may take medicine by mouth for the treatment of their acne. These are considered for more severe acne, or acne that is not improved with the medicines above. Each of these medications has unique potential side effects that your doctor will discuss with you. Some examples:

- » **Antibiotics** (such as doxycycline). Antibiotics can help calm down red, inflamed acne. They are usually used for 3-4 months to calm acne down.
- » **Hormonal treatments** (such as spironolactone and oral contraceptive pills). These help block the effects of hormones on oil glands.
- » **Isotretinoin**. This is a vitamin A derivative that is very effective for severe or scarring acne. It requires close monitoring for side effects.

**It's important to talk to your doctor about the best treatment for you!**

## YOUR ACNE TREATMENT PLAN

You or your doctor can fill in your acne treatment plan:

### MORNING

- Wash face with:
  - Gentle, non-medicated wash
  - Benzoyl peroxide \_\_\_\_%
  - Salicylic acid cleanser
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Apply \_\_\_\_\_ to affected areas of \_\_\_ face \_\_\_ chest \_\_\_ back
- If dry, apply non-scented, non-comedogenic moisturizer of your choice to affected areas.
- Take \_\_\_\_\_ by mouth.

### EVENING

- Wash face with:
  - Gentle, non-medicated wash
  - Benzoyl peroxide \_\_\_\_%
  - Salicylic acid cleanser
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Apply \_\_\_\_\_ to affected areas of \_\_\_ face \_\_\_ chest \_\_\_ back
- If dry, apply non-scented, non-comedogenic moisturizer of your choice to affected areas.
- Take \_\_\_\_\_ by mouth.



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