

# ACNE

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## YOU HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH ACNE



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### WHAT IS IT AND HOW DID I GET IT?

Most people get at least some acne, especially during their teenage years.

Why you get acne is complicated. One common belief is that acne comes from being dirty. This is not true; rather, acne is the result of changes that occur during puberty. Your skin is made of layers. To keep the skin from getting dry, the skin makes oil in little wells called "sebaceous glands" that are found in the deeper layers of the skin. "Whiteheads" or "blackheads" are clogged sebaceous glands. "Blackheads" are not caused by dirt blocking the pores, but rather by oxidation (a chemical reaction that occurs when the oil reacts with oxygen in the air). People with acne have glands that make more oil and are more easily plugged, causing the glands to swell. Hormones, bacteria (called P. acnes) and genetics also play a role.

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### WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP THE ACNE GO AWAY?

Acne is a common condition that may vary in severity. A number of topical and/or oral medications can be used for its treatment. Two to three months of consistent daily treatment is often needed to see maximal effect from a treatment regimen. That is how long it takes the skin layers to shed fully and recycle or "grow out." Remember that acne medications are supposed to prevent acne, and the goal is maintaining clear skin.

Some lifestyle changes can be beneficial in helping acne. Stress is known to aggravate acne, so try to get enough sleep and daily exercise. It is also important to eat a balanced diet. If you find that a certain food seems to aggravate your acne, you may consider avoiding that food. The best thing you can do for your acne is to practice good skin hygiene.

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### SKIN HYGIENE

- Wash your face twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening
- Avoid over-washing or scrubbing your face as this will not improve the acne and may lead to dryness and irritation.
- Use a mild cleanser something labeled "for sensitive skin" not a "deodorant soap."
- "Acne washes" may contain salicylic acid. Salicylic acid fights oil and bacteria mildly but can be drying and can add to irritation. Only use if recommended by your doctor.
- Do not scrub with a washcloth or loofah as this can irritate and inflame your acne.
- If you use makeup or sunscreen make sure that these products are labeled "won't clog pores" or "won't cause acne" or "non-comedogenic," which means it will not cause or worsen acne.
- Do not "pop pimples" or pick at your acne, as this can delay healing and may lead to infection, scarring or leave dark spots.
- Wash or change your pillow case 1-2 times per week.
- If you play sports, wash right away when you are done. Also, pay attention to how your sports equipment (shoulder pads, helmet strap, etc.) might rub against your skin and be making your acne worse!

## ACNE MEDICATIONS

If you have acne and the over the counter products are not working, you may need a prescription medication to help. Your doctor will tell you if you are one of those people. The good news is that acne treatments work really well when used properly.

### TIPS FOR USING YOUR ACNE MEDICATIONS CORRECTLY

- Apply your medication to clean, dry skin.
- Apply the medicine to the entire area of your face that gets acne. The medications work by preventing new breakouts. Spot treatment of individual pimples does not do much.
- Sometimes it is the combination of medicines that helps make the acne go away, not any single medication. Just because one medication may not have worked before does not mean it won't work when used in combination with another.
- The medications are not vanishing creams (they are not magic!) – they take weeks to months to work. Be patient and use your medicine on a daily basis or as directed for six weeks before you ask whether your skin looks better. Try not to miss more than one or two days each week.
- Don't stop putting on the medicine just because the acne is better. Remember that the acne is better because of the medication, and prevention is the key.
- When applying topical medications to the face, use the "5-dot" method. Take a small pea-sized amount and place dots 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 get you through this time include waiting 15-20 minutes after washing before applying the topical medication and starting out with use every 2-3 days, gradually working up to "every day" use.
  - Taking oral medications with food often helps with symptoms of upset stomach.
- Topical Retinoids (Differin/RetinA/Tazorac) are the best for whiteheads and blackheads. It works by peeling off the top layer of skin. Many people also use this to get rid of fine wrinkles. It is normal to go through a brief period when starting the medication to have a light peel. If you continue to peel, you may need to decrease the frequency of use or the amount of time the medication is on your skin. Start out using the medication every other night. If your skin gets too red and irritated, go to every third night. Some people opt to apply at dinnertime and then wash it off before bed.
- If you seem to be tolerating the medication well, you can go to using it every night.
- It is important that you NOT wax your face while using a topical retinoid, and using a sunscreen EVERYDAY.

## ACNE TREATMENT PLAN

### MORNING

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

### EVENING

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