

ACNE

YOU HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH ACNE



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. 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 pores. 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.

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, consider avoiding that food. **The best thing you can do for your acne is to practice good skin hygiene.**

SKIN HYGIENE

- Wash your face every morning and evening using your hands.
- Do not touch your face at any time unless your hands are clean.
- Avoid over-washing or scrubbing your face. It will not help acne and may lead to dryness and irritation.
- Use a mild cleanser like Cetaphil or CeraVe, something labeled for sensitive skin, not a deodorant soap.
- Acne washes may contain salicylic acid to mildly fight oil and bacteria. They can be drying and irritating. Only use if recommended by your doctor.
- Makeup and sunscreen must be non-comedogenic. This means products won't clog pores or make acne worse.
- Do not pop pimples or pick at acne. It can delay healing, cause infection, scarring or leave dark spots.
- Wash or change your pillowcase 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 over the counter products are not working, you may need prescription medication. Sometimes using a combination of medicines helps. If a medication did not work in the past, it might work in combination with another product. Your provider will determine the best treatment.

APPLYING YOUR MEDICATION

- Apply to clean, dry skin.
- Use the 5-dot method: place a pea-sized amount on the forehead, cheeks, nose, and chin, then gently rub in.
- If you see a film on your skin, you are likely using too much.
- Apply to the entire acne-prone area, not just individual pimples, unless your provider instructs otherwise.

USING YOUR MEDICATION CONSISTENTLY

- Acne medications work by preventing new breakouts.
- Use your medication every day or as directed.
- Results may take 6 weeks or longer. Be patient.
- Try not to miss more than one or two days per week.
- Do not stop using when your skin improves. Improvement happens because of continued treatment.

REDUCING DRYNESS AND IRRITATION – Mild dryness is common during the first 2 to 3 weeks.

- Start by using the medication every 2 to 3 days, then gradually increase to daily use.
- Wait 15 to 20 minutes after washing before applying medication.
- Apply moisturizer about 30 minutes after treatment to help reduce dryness.

DAILY HABITS THAT SUPPORT CLEAR SKIN

- Do not touch your face throughout the day.
- Do not pick or squeeze pimples.
- Wash your hands before applying medication.
- Keep pillowcases, makeup brushes, and phones clean.
- Use sunscreen every day. Retinoids increase sun sensitivity.

TOPICAL RETINOIDS (Differin/Retin-A/Tazorac) treat whiteheads and blackheads. They work by peeling off the top layer of skin. Many patients also use them to improve fine lines and skin texture.

- Mild peeling and dryness are common the first few weeks.
- Start every other night. If you get too red or irritated, decrease to every third night.
- When well tolerated, increase to nightly use.
- Some patients apply before dinner and rinse before bed to improve tolerance.
- Stop retinoid 3 to 5 days before extended sun exposure.
- Do not wax treated areas while using a retinoid.
- Use sunscreen every day, retinoids increase sun sensitivity.

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.
Take with food to help prevent an upset stomach.