

What is Acne? Acne vulgaris is a condition in which people form pimples in their follicles. Pimples occur mainly on the face, but often involve the neck, chest, back and upper arms. There are different types of pimples, including whiteheads, blackheads, papules, pustules, and cysts.

What Causes Acne? An ordinary follicle has skin proteins and oil flowing out of it onto the surface of the skin. The first event that creates acne is the formation of a sticky plug of protein and oil deep in the follicle. When a plug is big enough to be seen with the naked eye, it is called a comedone (whiteheads and blackheads).

Ordinary follicles have bacteria living in them. Once a plug (comedone) has formed, the bacteria grow better and split the oil in the follicle. The new, broken-up oil is very irritating to the skin and makes the skin develop red bumps (papules and pustules). Sometimes the skin develops large, inflamed collections in the skin called cysts.

Hormones play a roll in acne by promoting oil production. This helps the bacteria grow and gives the bacteria more oil to break-up, creating more irritation in the skin.

From the time a comedone is formed deep in your follicle until it becomes a visible pimple can be many months. Consequently, even if the medicine we give you stops your comedone from forming right away, you may notice your acne continuing for months. This is from the comedones that are already formed in your follicles and are still waiting to become visible pimples. Some substances such as creams, make-up and hair products may be "comedogenic." That means they promote the formation of plugs in your follicles.

Some people are more prone to acne than others, and this often runs in the family. When we treat acne, we use medicines to stop the formation of acne at different steps. Our medicines will not change the fact that you are prone to acne, and most people will redevelop acne if they stop their medications. Most (but not all) people outgrow acne. You will need to continue acne medicines until you outgrow your acne. Most will outgrow their acne problems by their early 20's.

SKIN HYGIENE - Dirt does not cause acne, despite what you may have been told. (A blackhead is skin oil and skin protein in a plug; not dirt!) The natural oil on the skin's surface also does no harm. Astringents, which strip off the skin's surface oil, face masks, and scrub pads, will not prevent you from forming plugs deep in your oil glands, and so they will not prevent or treat acne. However, they do tend to irritate the skin. When skin is too irritable, it does not tolerate the acne medicines, and it may even be more prone to papules and pustules than usual. We want your skin cleansing program to be gentle. If your cleansing is gentle, then your face will tolerate stronger acne medications, which do prevent and treat acne.

For the normal care of your skin, you should wash your face with a gentle cleanser and warm water twice a day. Too much washing and scrubbing can cause skin irritation.

CLEANSERS: __ Purpose® Gentle-cleansing soap
 __ Neutrogena soap
 __ Cetaphil Soap Free Cleansing Lotion
 __ Other Dove soap

Do not pick, squeeze, or otherwise manipulate your pimples, as it can leave scars.

DIET AND ACNE - Foods do not cause acne. Many persons try all sorts of diets and are frustrated because they don't help. The most common ones are chocolate, nuts, cola drinks, and root beer. A few people who drink large quantities of milk (over a quart daily) find that this worsens their acne. Aggravation of acne by food varies from person to person. Many acne patients can eat chocolate without trouble, while others find that even a few pieces of chocolate cause new pimples. Find out for yourself if the foods just mentioned aggravate your acne. Eliminate one for a few weeks and then test its effects by eating a large amount. If your skin improves when you stop eating a food and gets worse when you eat, repeat the test. Acne has ups and downs of its own; make sure that the worsening is not just a coincidence. If certain foods definitely worsen your acne, avoid them.

NERVES AND ACNE - Acne is not caused by nerves and worry, but may become worse under stress. Some persons react to stress by picking, squeezing, or rubbing their pimples, and this can make their acne worse.

TREATMENT- Treatment of acne is an ongoing process if it is to be controlled successfully. The therapy your dermatologist will recommend will vary according to your type of acne. Your dermatologist must determine first if your skin condition is common acne. Occasionally, an acne like rash can be due to another cause- such as make-up or lotions you've used or oral medication. It's important to help your dermatologist by providing him or her with a history of what you are using on your skin and taking internally.

→ Benzoyl peroxide 5%

Many non-prescription acne lotions and creams can help milder cases of acne. However, many of them will make the skin dry if used too often. If you use these products, follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully. When buying make-up, make sure it is non-comedogenic or non-acnegenic.

Non-comedogenic means that using the cosmetic should not result in the formation of blackheads or whiteheads. These products are oil free and water based. Cosmetics should be removed at night with soap and water.

Your Dermatologist may prescribe topical preparations to help unblock the pores and reduce bacteria. These products may produce some drying and peeling. Your dermatologist may recommend a lotion to help with the dryness. In the morning a lotion with sunscreen is often recommended.

LOTIONS WITH SUNSCREEN: Neutrogena moisture with SPF 15
Oil of Olay with SPF 15
Neutrogena Oil Free SPF 30

Antibiotics taken by mouth are often prescribed for moderate or severe cases, especially when there is a lot of acne on the back or chest. The antibiotics are used to reduce the bacteria in the follicle. There are also antibiotic preparations that can be applied to the skin. These are used in less severe cases of acne.