

Acne

“Acne” is the term for pimples or blackheads that appear on the face, chest, upper back, or shoulders. A pimple forms when an oil gland in the skin becomes blocked, causing secretions and bacteria to build up. Stress and some kinds of birth control pills may also contribute to acne. Chocolate and other foods are no longer considered a major cause of the condition, but you should avoid any food that seems to be causing pimples. Although most common in adolescence, acne can continue into adulthood. Women often get a few pimples right before they menstruate.

How can you prevent acne?

To help prevent acne, wash your face with a mild soap, such as Dove, Aveeno, Neutrogena, Basis, or one that contains benzoyl peroxide. These soaps can be purchased over-the-counter in any drug store. Don't scrub, but do wash as often as needed to keep your face clean.

How can you treat acne at home?

For most people, mild acne disappears with time or with the use of nonprescription treatments. If you have a mild case of acne, you can try these five steps to treat it at home:

1. Wash your face, shoulders, chest, and back with soapy water using a gentle soap. Rinse well.
2. Apply benzoyl peroxide gel or cream once a day about 30 minutes after washing. Start with the lowest strength and never use more than a five percent strength benzoyl peroxide solution, unless your doctor or other health care professional recommends a stronger solution. Several brands are available over-the-counter at your Kaiser Permanente Pharmacy or your local drug store. This medication may have some side-effects, such as mild redness and dryness on the skin. It may also take several weeks to work.
3. Wash your hair every day if it is oily, and try to keep it off of your face and shoulders.
4. Only use water-based lotions and cosmetics that do not clog skin pores, and then only if they don't irritate your skin.
5. Never pop pimples and blackheads; this can lead to slow healing and scarring.

When should you call Kaiser Permanente?

If you've tried home treatment and still have significant acne, be sure to call your doctor. This is especially important if you have red or purple inflammation, cysts, or nodules under the skin. Many prescription treatments are available.

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Use these Kaiser Permanente resources for reliable health information:

- ❖ Connect to our Web site at **members.kp.org** to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, message boards, health classes, and much more.
- ❖ Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- ❖ Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.