



Points To Remember About Acne

- Acne is a common skin condition that happens when hair follicles under the skin become clogged.
- Acne causes several types of lesions, or pimples.
- Medications and other procedures such as laser and light therapies are the most common treatments.
- The goals of treatment are to help heal lesions, stop new lesions from forming, and prevent scarring.
- Acne can cause embarrassment or make you feel shy or anxious. If you have any of these feelings, talk to your doctor.

What is acne?

Acne is a common skin condition that happens when hair follicles under the skin become clogged. Oil and dead skin cells plug the pores, and outbreaks of lesions (often called pimples or zits) can happen. Most often, the outbreaks occur on the face but can also appear on the back, chest, and shoulders.

For most people, acne tends to go away by the time they reach their thirties, but some people in their forties and fifties continue to have this skin problem.

Who gets acne?

People of all races and ages get acne, but it is most common in teens and young adults. When acne appears during the teenage years, it is more common in males. Acne can continue into adulthood, and when it does, it is more common in women.

What are the types of acne?

Acne causes several types of lesions, or pimples. Some types:

- Stay under the skin and produce a white bump (called whiteheads).

- Reach the surface of the skin and open up (called blackheads).
- Appear as small, pink bumps on the skin and can be tender to the touch.
- Are topped by white or yellow pus-filled lesions that may be red at the base.
- Are large, painful solid lesions that are deep within the skin.
- Cause deep, painful, pus-filled lesions.

What causes acne?

Doctors believe that one or more of the following can lead to acne:

- Too much oil in the pore.
- Buildup of dead skin cells in the pore.
- Growth of bacteria in the pore.

The following factors may make it more likely for you to develop acne:

- Hormones.
- Family history.
- Medications.
- Age.

The following do not cause acne, but may make it worse.

- Certain foods.
- Stress.
- Pressure from sports helmets, tight clothes, or backpacks.
- Pollution and high humidity.
- Squeezing or picking at pimples.
- Scrubbing your skin too hard.

Is there a test for acne?

To see if you have acne, doctors may:

- Ask about your family history, and, for girls or women, ask about their menstrual cycles.
- Ask about your symptoms, including how long you have had lesions.
- Ask what medications you have taken recently.
- Look at your skin to help determine the type of acne lesion.
- Order lab work to determine if another condition or medical disorder is causing the lesions.

How is acne treated?

The goals of treatment are to:

- Help heal lesions.
- Stop new lesions from forming.
- Prevent scarring.

Medications can help stop some of the causes of acne from developing. Your doctor may recommend over-the-counter or prescription medications to take by mouth or apply to the skin. Talk to your doctor about any side effects that you experience.

Some people who have severe acne may need additional treatments, such as:

- Laser and light therapies.
- Procedure to remove the acne when other treatments are not helpful.
- Superficial chemical peels that a doctor applies to remove the outermost layers of the skin.
- Surgical procedures to help treat and repair scarring.

Who treats acne?

The following doctors may diagnose and treat acne:

- Dermatologists, who specialize in conditions of the skin, hair, and nails.
- Primary health care providers, including family doctors, internists, or pediatricians.

Living with acne

If you have acne, the following may help you take care of your skin.

- Clean your skin gently. Use a mild cleanser in the morning, in the evening, and after heavy exercise. Try to avoid using strong soaps, astringents, or rough scrub pads. Rinse your skin with lukewarm water.
- Shampoo your hair regularly.
- Avoid rubbing and touching skin lesions.
- Shave gently and only when necessary to reduce the risk of nicking blemishes. Soften the hair with soap and water before applying shaving cream.
- Use sunscreen, and avoid sunburn and suntan.
- Choose cosmetics carefully. All cosmetics and hair care products should be oil free.

Acne can cause embarrassment or make you feel shy or anxious. If you have any of these feelings, talk to your doctor.

For more info

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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