

tool kit for teen care

Acne in Teens

fact sheet



Who gets acne?

- Acne affects almost all teens.
- It begins around puberty when the body produces more hormones called androgens, which make the oil glands produce more oil.

How does acne occur?

- Acne is a plugging of pores and overgrowth of bacteria in skin's pores.
- Dead skin cells and the oily secretion (sebum) clog pores and form a plug.
- Bacteria become trapped in the pore and irritate the skin and hair follicle.
- The irritation around the plugged pore and hair follicle forms a red bump called acne.
- A black plug, or blackhead, is formed when the dead skin comes to the surface.

Are there degrees of acne?

- Acne can range from mild to severe.
- When severe, it often results in scarring.
- Deep cystic acne can result in the typical "ice pick" scarring.

What contributes to acne?

- Family history
- Hot humid climate
- Oily cosmetics
- Rubbing and irritating the skin
- Stress

What helps to reduce acne?

- A healthy diet and regular exercise are good for overall skin health. Specific foods, such as fatty foods and chocolate, probably do not make acne worse.
- Touching or squeezing blemishes can increase redness and scarring and should be avoided.
- Using skin care products labeled "non-acnegenic," "non-comedogenic," "oil-free," or "won't clog pores" can help.
- Rubbing alcohol won't help acne and may cause irritation.
- It helps to keep hair off the forehead.
- Keeping hands and telephone off of the face reduces acne.

How is acne treated?

- Medicine can be bought without a prescription (2.5–10% benzoyl peroxide) and applied to the skin (topically).
- If this doesn't work, a doctor can be contacted.
- There are many prescriptive options for acne, including birth control pills, antibiotics, and treatments applied to the skin.
- A mild soap should be used and the skin should be washed gently. Frequent or hard washing will damage the skin and cause more inflammation.
- Acne medicines should be applied to the entire area where the break-out occurs, not just on the individual blemishes.





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For More Information

We have provided information on the following organizations and web sites because they have information that may be of interest to our readers. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists does not necessarily endorse the views expressed or the facts presented by these organizations or on these web sites. Further, ACOG does not endorse any commercial products that may be advertised or available from these organizations or on these web sites.

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Go Ask Alice!

Columbia University Health Service
www.goaskalice.columbia.edu

National Women's Health Information Center

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www.4woman.org