
Dealing with Acne

For most adolescents, acne is an unpleasant fact of life. But the good news is that it can be helped. Adolescents are prone to acne because the body's hormones stimulate certain glands to produce an oily substance called sebum. When sebum becomes trapped in a hair follicle, a blackhead, or whitehead forms. Then, if bacteria start to multiply, the follicle becomes inflamed and forms a pimple. Some girls notice more acne around their periods.

There's no real cure for acne, but here are some ways to keep it under control:

- 1.** Keep skin and hair clean. Wash the face twice a day with warm water and a mild, nonmedicated soap such as Dove, Basis or Neutrogena is beneficial. But don't overdo it. Intense scrubbing can irritate the skin and sometime even make acne worse. "Thorough but gentle" is the key. Hair should be worn away from the face, and use of anti-dandruff shampoo can also help.
- 2.** Treat occasional flare-ups with a non-prescription lotion or cream containing benzoyl peroxide. If using make-up, be sure the label says it's water-based and "noncomedogenic", which means it won't cause pimples. "Non-comedogenic" sunscreens are also available, and we recommend their use.
- 3.** Don't pick at blemishes. Squeezing a pimple can make it worse or create a scar. And picking or squeezing zits spreads infection and makes more zits!
- 4.** There's no truth that certain foods--like chocolate, colas, or french fries--cause acne. But if something seems to make you break out, it can't hurt to leave it alone. It's always best to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.

If a teen feels self-conscious about acne, or has lots of angry red pimples, call us for help. There are many good treatments for acne, but they take time and supervision. It's worth the effort to get acne under control before it causes permanent scarring.