



Acne Treatments

What is Acne?

Acne is a common skin condition. It is irritation of the skin resulting in pimples (zits), cysts, blackheads, and/or whiteheads.

- Acne is a common skin condition that is caused by a buildup of oil in your hair follicles (small openings on the skin that hair grows out of) that can sometimes get infected.
- It is very common and can often get better with over the counter treatments
- Sometimes, a healthcare provider may prescribe medicine to help with acne

Things to do every day

- Washing your face with lukewarm water at least twice a day is really important.
- Use clean fingers or a special washcloth just for your face when cleaning.
- Apply a scent-free facial moisturizer to dry skin after a wash.

Over the counter treatment

- Using an unscented, oil-free cleanser designed for your face is sometimes enough to keep acne under control.
- **Salicylic Acid Face Wash** is a stronger face cleanser with a mild acidic medicine in it which can remove extra oil from the skin. This can be used twice a day. Some companies make a body spray with Salicylic Acid that can help manage acne on other parts of your body.
- **Benzoyl Peroxide (BP) Face Wash** is stronger than salicylic acid. It kills some of the bacteria that cause acne and it takes away some of acne's redness and swelling. It comes in strengths from 2.5%-10% and can be used once or twice a day. Because it is strong, it is important to use a moisturizer after use and talk to your healthcare provider if your skin starts to flake, dry out, or get irritated. It can also bleach your towels and washcloths so have special towels just for your face.
- **Differin (Adapalene)** is medicine just for acne that comes as a gel or a cream. After washing and drying your face, you apply a pea-sized amount in a thin layer on your face. Start using it every other night and if you are doing well, you can put it on every night after a few weeks. When you first start using it, it may turn your face red but this gets better for most people after a few weeks. Make sure to wear sunscreen every day to avoid burning sensitive skin on your face.

Prescription Medicines

- If your acne is not improving with home therapies after 6-8 weeks, your healthcare provider may prescribe one of the following common acne medications. There are lots of different kinds of medicine so if you don't see your medicine on this list, talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions.
- **Retinoids (Topical)**
 - There are lots of different kinds and brand-names for this type of medicine
 - They usually come as a cream or a gel and are applied in a thin layer to a clean face.
 - Sometimes these can make skin very dry or make acne a little worse before it begins to improve
 - Can be used by themselves or sometimes with other medicines
- **Clindamycin/ Erythromycin (Topical)**
 - Can come in a gel, lotion, solution or even a foam
 - Usually is combined with benzoyl peroxide so it works even better
 - These are applied to a clean and dry face once or twice a day
 - While some redness can occur when you first start using this, most people notice things starting to improve in 3-4 months.
- **Spirolactone (oral)**
 - This is a non-hormonal pill that is usually taken twice a day
 - Usually this is prescribed with over-the-counter or prescription topical medicines to use as well
 - Some people might notice a change to their periods on this medicine.
 - Some doctors want their patients to also be on a birth control method when they use this because it can cause birth defects if taken while pregnant.
- **Antibiotics (oral)**
 - There are many different types of antibiotics that can be used to manage acne.
 - They are usually given as a pill once or twice a day
 - Usually, oral antibiotics are only used for a few months to see if acne gets better
 - These are usually prescribed with a Benzoyl Peroxide medicine too
- **Hormonal Therapy (oral, patch)**
 - In girls who have already started their periods, sometimes hormonal medicines that you take by mouth or that you wear as a patch on your skin can help with acne
 - Hormonal medicine can be used by itself and sometimes it can be combined with other medicines like Spirolactone or an antibiotic
 - Usually this takes at least three months to begin to see improvement in acne.
 - Most girls notice their periods get more regular, lighter, and less crampy while on these medicines.

- **Accutane (Isoretinoin) (oral)**

- This is a strong medicine that is usually only prescribed when other medicines don't work.
- This is usually prescribed by a Dermatologist (skin specialist)
- It is taken twice a day with meals for about 20 weeks and then stopped.
- Doctors usually start one or two birth control methods when patients are on this because it can cause severe birth defects if taken while pregnant.
- You may need to have your blood drawn before starting or while on therapy to make sure your body is handling the medicine well.
- Usually other acne medications are stopped while taking Accutane, though washing your face regularly is still very important.
- It is important to keep all your checkups with your doctor while on this medication.

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