



## What is acne and why do I have pimples?

The medical term for “pimples” is acne. Most people develop at least some acne, especially during their teenage years. Although many believe that acne comes from being dirty, this is not true; rather, acne is the result of changes that occur during puberty.

Your skin is made of layers. To keep the skin from getting dry, the skin makes oil in little wells called “sebaceous glands” that are found in the deeper layers of the skin. “Whiteheads” or “blackheads” are clogged sebaceous glands. “Blackheads” are not caused by dirt blocking the pores, but rather by oxidation (a chemical reaction that occurs when the oil reacts with oxygen in the air). People with acne have glands that make more oil and are more easily plugged, causing the glands to swell. Hormones, bacteria (called *P. acnes*) and your family’s likelihood to have acne (genetic susceptibility) also play a role.

### SKIN HYGIENE

**Good skin care habits are important and support the medications your doctor prescribes for your acne.**

- » Wash your face twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening (which includes any showers you take).
- » Avoid over-washing/over-scrubbing your face as this will not improve the acne and may lead to dryness and irritation, which can interfere with your medications.
- » In general, milder soaps and cleansers are better for acne-prone skin. The soaps labeled “for sensitive skin” are milder than those labeled “deodorant soap” or “antibacterial soap.”
- » Many “acne washes” may contain salicylic acid. **Salicylic acid (SA)** fights oil and bacteria mildly but can be drying and can add to irritation. Start with a non-medicated cleanser and then progress to a salicylic acid wash only if needed. Scrubbing with a washcloth or loofah is also not advised as this can irritate and inflame your acne. Facial cleansing brushes such as Clarisonic are considered safe.
- » If you use makeup or sunscreen, make sure that these products are labeled “won’t clog pores” or “won’t cause acne” or “non-comedogenic,” which means it will not cause or worsen acne.
- » Try not to “pop pimples” or pick at your acne. This can delay healing and may lead to scarring or leave dark spots. Picking/popping acne can also cause a serious infection.
- » Wash or change your pillow case 1-2 times per week, especially if you use hair products.

2121 Park Street Jacksonville, FL 32204 904.387.6200

7741 Point Meadows Drive Suite 207 Jacksonville, FL 32256 904.997.0023

[www.carithersgroup.com](http://www.carithersgroup.com)



- » If you play sports, try to wash right away when you are done. Also, pay attention to how your sports equipment (shoulder pads, helmet strap, etc.) might rub against your skin and be making your acne worse!

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP THE ACNE GO AWAY?

Some lifestyle changes can be beneficial in helping acne. Stress is known to aggravate acne, so try to get enough sleep and exercise daily. It is also important to eat a balanced diet. Some people feel that certain foods (like pizza, soda or chocolate) worsen their acne, but dermatologists report that strict dietary changes are unlikely to be helpful. If you find that a certain food seems to aggravate your acne, you may consider avoiding that food.

## HOW SHOULD I TREAT MY ACNE?

Acne may vary in severity and thus treatment regimens will vary as well. A number of topical and/or oral medications can be used for its treatment. Two to three months of consistent daily treatment is often needed to see maximal effect from a treatment regimen. That is how long it takes the skin layers to shed fully and recycle or “grow out.” Remember that acne medications are supposed to prevent acne, and the goal is maintaining clear skin. Initially you should approach your acne with topical acne medications, many of which are over the counter. It is often recommended that you start with these but sometimes prescription topical medications will be initiated too.

## TOPICAL ACNE MEDICATIONS

- » Benzoyl peroxide (BP) helps to fight inflammation and is anti-microbial (kills bacteria) and is believed to help prevent resistance of bacteria to topical antibiotics. Benzoyl Peroxide treatments come in many forms from creams, gels, washes and cleansers. Be careful because benzoyl peroxide can bleach towels and clothing.
- » Retinoids (such as adapalene, tretinoin, or tazarotene) unplug the oil glands by helping peel away the layers of skin and other things plugging the opening of the glands. Mild irritation and dryness are common when first using these products. Facial treatments and other skin procedures can lead to excessive irritation and should be avoided during retinoid therapy. Retinoids can also make the skin more sensitive to the sun and can be inactivated by sunlight so they are best used at night.
- » Antibiotics fight bacteria and help decrease inflammation. Topical antibiotics commonly used in acne include clindamycin, erythromycin, and combination agents (such as clindamycin/benzoyl peroxide or erythromycin/benzoyl peroxide). Mild irritation and dryness are common when first using these products. Typically, topical antibiotics should not be used alone as treatment for acne, they should be used with a benzoyl peroxide product.

2121 Park Street Jacksonville, FL 32204 904.387.6200

7741 Point Meadows Drive Suite 207 Jacksonville, FL 32256 904.997.0023

[www.carithersgroup.com](http://www.carithersgroup.com)



### TIPS FOR USING YOUR TOPICAL ACNE MEDICATIONS CORRECTLY

- » Apply your medication to clean, dry skin. Topical medications may lead to significant dryness. To minimize this, wait 15-20 minutes after washing before applying, or at least make sure your skin is fully dry.
- » Apply the medicine to the entire area of your face that gets acne (even if the label says spot treatment). The medications work by preventing new breakouts. Spot treatment of individual pimples does not do much. Start by placing a small, pea-sized amount of medication on your finger. Then place “dots” in each of the five locations of your face: Mid-forehead, each cheek, nose, and chin. Next, rub the medication into the entire area of your face, not just on the individual pimples! Try to avoid the delicate skin around your eyes and the corner of the mouth.
- » Sometimes it is the combination of medicines that helps make the acne go away, not any single medication. Just because one medication may not have worked before does not mean it won't work when used in combination with another.
- » The medications are not vanishing creams (they are not magic!) – they take weeks to months to work. Be patient and use your medicine on a daily basis or as directed for six weeks before you ask whether your skin looks better. Try not to miss more than one or two days each week.
- » If your medications make your skin too dry, try using them “every other night” or even “every third night.” Gradually work up to daily.
- » Moisturizer, sunscreen, and make-up may be used in conjunction with topical acne medications. In general, acne medications are applied first so they may directly contact the skin.
- » Don't stop putting on the medicine just because the acne is better. Remember that the acne is better because of the medication, and prevention is the key.

### **ORAL ACNE MEDICATIONS**

Oral antibiotics include tetracycline-class medicines (minocycline and doxycycline), erythromycin and occasionally cephalexin or azithromycin. These drugs may decrease bacteria and inflammation, and are most effective for moderate-to-severe acne. A product containing benzoyl peroxide should be used along with these antibiotics to help decrease the possibility of bacterial resistance.



## SIDE EFFECTS OF ORAL ACNE MEDICATIONS

- » Minocycline and doxycycline have several possible side effects in common. If you notice any of the following, stop using the medication and notify the health care provider: headaches; blurred vision or other changes in vision; dizziness; significant sunburn with minimal exposure; heartburn or stomach pain; irritation of the esophagus; darkening of scars, gums, or teeth (more often with minocycline); nail changes; yellowing of the skin (indicating possible liver disease); joint pains, and flu-like symptoms. Taking oral antibiotics with food may help prevent an upset stomach.
- » Additionally, heartburn, or pain in the esophagus is a common side effect. To reduce the risk of these kinds of problems: (1) Always take the pills with lots of water and (2) Don't take a pill right before getting into bed—stay upright for at least one hour if possible.

## **ACNE TREATMENT PLAN**

### Morning:

1. Wash face with non-medicated wash
  - i. (May wash with salicylic acid wash if skin not too dry or irritated)
2. Dry skin completely
3. Apply or wash with Benzoyl peroxide cream/gel/wash if instructed
4. AND/OR
5. Apply Prescription AM medication if instructed
6. Allow skin to dry
7. Apply facial moisturizer with sunscreen
8. Take oral medication if prescribed

### Evening:

1. Wash face with non-medicated wash
  - i. (May wash with salicylic acid wash if skin not too dry or irritated)
2. Dry skin completely
3. Apply or wash with Benzoyl peroxide cream/gel/wash if instructed
4. Allow skin to dry
5. Apply Prescription PM medication if instructed
6. Allow skin to dry
7. Apply facial moisturizer
8. Take oral medication if prescribed



Talk to your doctor if you are not using the acne medications we had originally recommended. Let us know any problems you are having. Common reasons for people to not use their medications include the following:

- » The medication was prescribed by my doctor before and it did not work then, so why would it work now.
- » The medication cost too much.
- » The medication didn't feel good on my skin. For example, it left my skin too dry, red, or greasy
- » The medication was too hard to use.
- » The medication had side effects that were not tolerable.
- » The acne plan was too complicated

We can try to work through these problems if they arise. The important part is trying to stick with a plan.

Thank you for letting us take part in your care.