

# What is acne and why do I have pimples?

The medical term for "pimples" is acne. Most people get at least some acne, especially during their teenage years. Why you get acne is complicated. One common belief is 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

Washing your face is part of taking good care of your skin. 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."
- » "Acne washes" may contain salicylic acid. Salicylic acid fights oil and bacteria mildly but can be drying and can add to irritation, so hold off using it unless recommended by your doctor. Scrubbing with a washcloth or loofah is also not advised as this can irritate and inflame your acne.
- » 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, as this can delay healing and may lead to scarring or leave dark spots behind. 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.
- » 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 as well. Stress is known to aggravate acne, so try to get enough sleep and daily exercise. It is also important to eat a balanced diet. Some people feel that certain foods (like pizza, soda or chocolate) worsen their acne. While there aren't many studies available on this question, strict dietary changes are unlikely to be helpful and may be harmful to your health. If you find that a certain food seems to aggravate your acne, you may consider avoiding that food.

## HOW SHOULD I USE MY ACNE MEDICATIONS?

Acne is a common condition that may vary in severity. 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. Talk to your doctor if you are not using your acne medications as you had originally discussed. Let them know any problems you are having. Common reasons for people to not use their medications include the following:

- » I used the medication prescribed by my doctor before and it did not work then; why should I use it again now?
- » The medication I was prescribed cost too much!
- » I did not like the way the medication felt on my skin. For example, it left my skin too dry or too greasy!
- » The medication was too hard to use!
- » I can't remember to do it!
- » The medication had side effects that I did not like!
- » The acne plan was too complicated; I need something simpler to do!

## ACNE MEDICATIONS

If you have acne and the over the counter products are not working, you may need a prescription medication to help. Your doctor will tell you if you are one of those people. The good news is that acne treatments work really well when used properly.

## TIPS FOR USING YOUR ACNE MEDICATIONS CORRECTLY

- » Apply your medication to clean, dry skin.
- » Apply the medicine to the entire area of your face that gets acne. The medications work by preventing new breakouts. Spot treatment of individual pimples does not do much.
- » 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.
- » 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.

## PREGNANCY AND ACNE TREATMENT

If you are pregnant, planning pregnancy or breastfeeding, please discuss with your doctor as your acne medication regimen may need to be altered.

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## SAMPLE ACNE TREATMENT PLAN

### MORNING:

- Wash face with:
  - Gentle, non-medicated wash
  - Benzoyl peroxide \_\_\_\_%
  - Salicylic acid cleanser
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Apply \_\_\_\_\_ to affected areas of \_\_\_\_ face \_\_\_\_ chest \_\_\_\_ back
- If dry, apply non-scented, non-comedogenic moisturizer of your choice to affected areas.
- Take \_\_\_\_\_ by mouth.

### EVENING:

- Wash face with:
  - Gentle, non-medicated wash
  - Benzoyl peroxide \_\_\_\_%
  - Salicylic acid cleanser
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Apply \_\_\_\_\_ to affected areas of \_\_\_\_ face \_\_\_\_ chest \_\_\_\_ back
- If dry, apply non-scented, non-comedogenic moisturizer of your choice to affected areas.
- Take \_\_\_\_\_ by mouth \_\_\_\_\_ times a day.
  - » When applying topical medications to the face, use the "5-dot" method. Take a small pea-sized amount and place dots in each of 5 locations of your face: mid-forehead, each cheek, nose, and chin. Then rub in. You should not see a "film" of the medication on your skin; if you do, you're probably using too much.
  - » Topical medications may lead to dryness where you use them. This almost always improves as your skin gets used to the medication (about 2-3 weeks). Some tips to get you through this time include waiting 15-20 minutes after washing before applying the topical medication and starting out with use every 2-3 days, gradually working up to "every day" use.
  - » Taking oral medications with food often helps with symptoms of upset stomach.

### OTHER:



# BRIGHT FUTURES HANDOUT ► PATIENT 11 THROUGH 14 YEAR VISITS

Here are some suggestions from Bright Futures experts that may be of value to you and your family.

## ✓ HOW YOU ARE DOING

- Enjoy spending time with your family. Look for ways to help out at home.
- Follow your family's rules.
- Try to be responsible for your schoolwork.
- If you need help getting organized, ask your parents or teachers.
- Try to read every day.
- Find activities you are really interested in, such as sports or theater.
- Find activities that help others.
- Figure out ways to deal with stress in ways that work for you.
- Don't smoke, vape, use drugs, or drink alcohol. Talk with us if you are worried about alcohol or drug use in your family.
- Always talk through problems and never use violence.
- If you get angry with someone, try to walk away.

## ✓ HEALTHY BEHAVIOR CHOICES

- Find fun, safe things to do.
- Talk with your parents about alcohol and drug use.
- Say "No!" to drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and e-cigarettes, and sex. Saying "No!" is OK.
- Don't share your prescription medicines; don't use other people's medicines.
- Choose friends who support your decision not to use tobacco, alcohol, or drugs. Support friends who choose not to use.
- Healthy dating relationships are built on respect, concern, and doing things both of you like to do.
- Talk with your parents about relationships, sex, and values.
- Talk with your parents or another adult you trust about puberty and sexual pressures. Have a plan for how you will handle risky situations.

## ✓ YOUR GROWING AND CHANGING BODY

- Brush your teeth twice a day and floss once a day.
- Visit the dentist twice a year.
- Wear a mouth guard when playing sports.
- Be a healthy eater. It helps you do well in school and sports.
  - Have vegetables, fruits, lean protein, and whole grains at meals and snacks.
  - Limit fatty, sugary, salty foods that are low in nutrients, such as candy, chips, and ice cream.
  - Eat when you're hungry. Stop when you feel satisfied.
  - Eat with your family often.
  - Eat breakfast.
- Choose water instead of soda or sports drinks.
- Aim for at least 1 hour of physical activity every day.
- Get enough sleep.

## ✓ YOUR FEELINGS

- Be proud of yourself when you do something good.
- It's OK to have up-and-down moods, but if you feel sad most of the time, let us know so we can help you.
- It's important for you to have accurate information about sexuality, your physical development, and your sexual feelings toward the opposite or same sex. Ask us if you have any questions.

# 11 THROUGH 14 YEAR VISITS—PATIENT



## STAYING SAFE

- Always wear your lap and shoulder seat belt.
- Wear protective gear, including helmets, for playing sports, biking, skating, skiing, and skateboarding.
- Always wear a life jacket when you do water sports.
- Always use sunscreen and a hat when you're outside. Try not to be outside for too long between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm, when it's easy to get a sunburn.
- Don't ride ATVs.
- Don't ride in a car with someone who has used alcohol or drugs. Call your parents or another trusted adult if you are feeling unsafe.
- Fighting and carrying weapons can be dangerous. Talk with your parents, teachers, or doctor about how to avoid these situations.

Consistent with *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents, 4th Edition*

For more information, go to <https://brightfutures.aap.org>.

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## E-Cigarettes

### What are E-Cigarettes?

E-Cigarettes, JUULS, vapes, vape pens, dab pens, mods or tanks are electronic devices that use a battery to aerosolize a liquid which is then inhaled. This liquid usually contains nicotine, chemicals, flavors and other additives. These electronic devices can also be used to deliver marijuana and other substances. The use of these devices has increased rapidly and they are now more common than traditional cigarettes among middle and high school students.

### Why are they harmful?

**Nicotine:** Many people may not know that the liquid used in these electronic devices usually contains nicotine. A single JUUL pod contains as much nicotine as a pack of 20 regular cigarettes! Nicotine in any form is not safe for youth as it is highly addictive, can harm the developing brain and affect memory and concentration. Nicotine use may also increase risk for certain mood disorders and negatively affect impulse control. E-cigarette use is strongly associated with other tobacco products like regular cigarettes.

**Other chemicals:** The liquid used in these electronic devices may contain chemicals including flavorants like Diacetyl (a chemical linked to serious lung disease), volatile organic compounds, and heavy metals like tin and lead. Heavy metals can cause respiratory distress and disease. Other chemicals in the e-liquids and in the aerosol from e-cigarettes are known to cause cancer in humans.

Some e-cigarettes have also exploded and hurt or burned people.

### Impact on others:

The cloud created by e-cigarettes can be harmful to others. The e-liquid and e-cigarettes can also be extremely harmful to infants and young children if swallowed or handled incorrectly.

### Further resources:

E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.Gov

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/tobacco/Pages/Facts-For-Parents-About-E-Cigarettes-Electronic-Nicotine-Delivery-Systems.aspx>