

Amelia Pare MD Plastic surgeon 123 Hidden Valley Rd, McMurray, PA 15317  
724-941-8838

### **Acne care instructions**

Acne (acne vulgaris, common acne) is not just a problem for teenagers, but can affect people of all ages. Some adult woman experience acne due to hormone changes associated with pregnancy, their menstrual cycle, or changes in birth control pills. On the positive side, few people have acne in middle age. Acne may appear on the skin as congested pores, whiteheads, black heads, pimples, pustules and cysts. These blemishes occur whenever there are many oil (sebaceous) glands, mainly on the face, chest and back.

Acne has many causes. There are at least 3 contributing factors for acne: overproduction of sebum (oil), irregular shedding of dead skin cells resulting in irritation of the hair follicles of your skin, and a buildup of bacteria. Sebum (oil) is a natural substance that lubricates and protects the skin. Under certain circumstances, cells close to the surface block the opening of the sebaceous glands resulting in a buildup of oil underneath. This oil stimulates bacteria which naturally live on everyone's skin to multiply. In large numbers this bacteria may cause an irritation to the surrounding tissue and it becomes inflamed (red and swollen). Inflammation near the skins surface may produce a pustule; deeper inflammation may result in a papule (pimple) and deeper still a full cyst may form. If the oil breaks through the surface, the result is a whitehead. If the oil accumulates melanin pigment or becomes oxidized, the oil changes from white to black resulting in a black head. Blackheads are not dirt and do not reflect poor hygiene. Other pores in your skin which are the opening of sweat glands to your skin are not usually involved in acne.

### **Methods of prevention**

1. Wash acne prone areas only twice a day. Washing removes excess oils and dead skin cells. Too much washing can irritate the skin. Wash areas with a gentle cleanser (**salicylic acid wipes**) and use oil free, water based skin care products.

2. Use an over the counter acne cream or gel (**benzoyl peroxide** i.e. Oxy-10, or generic version) for spot treatments. Look for products containing benzyl peroxide for specific areas that are inflamed or salicylic acid may be used to soothe the inflamed skin and remove dirt oil and harmful bacteria.
3. Avoid heavy foundation makeup. Powder cosmetics are less irritating than overly creamy products.
4. Remove makeup before going to bed. Going sleep with cosmetics on your skin can clog tiny opening at the hair follicles.
5. Wear loose fitting clothing. Tight fitting clothing may trap heat and moisture and can irritate your skin.
6. Shower after exercising or doing strenuous work. Oil and sweat on your skin can trap dirt and bacteria.
7. The new oral contraceptive, Yaz, may be a better contraceptive alternative for female patients with acne. Ask your gynecologist.
8. Commonly Used Acne treatments: **Benzaclin Gel** may be used at bedtime. Use white pillow cases, wash cloths and towels separately because benzaclin gel can bleach colors. **Sulfacet lotion** – cannot be used for patients who have allergy to sulfa drugs. It may be used in the morning and at bedtime. **Epiduo** typically combined with Retin A and benzaclin peroxide. It is used at bedtime. **Tetracycline, minocycline or doxycycline** are all antibiotics. Please refrain from taking these antibiotics with dairy products for at least one hour. Do not take at bedtime as it can cause esophageal reflux. Take with a small amount of food to prevent GI upset. Use sunscreen due to sunlight sensitivity.