

ACNE

WHAT IT IS

Acne happens when pores become clogged by dead skin cells resulting in build up of sebum, a greasy and waxy material made by oil glands. Bacteria within pores can contribute to blockage and inflammation – visible as redness, swelling and pus that may accompany acne spots.

TRIGGERS

Several factors can make acne flare up or lead to breakouts, but the triggers can vary from person to person. Every person is different. You can help to control the condition by avoiding things that you notice make your acne worse.

COSMETICS

Makeup and hair care products can clog pores. The Canadian Dermatology Association's *Skin Health Program* recognizes skincare products that meet important criteria including being gentle on skin, fragrance free and non-pore clogging. When shopping, look for our recognized product logo on labels. Other acne-friendly terms on labels to look for are 'oil-free', 'non-comedogenic' or 'non-acnegenic'.



PHYSICAL PRESSURE

Pressure due to a chinstrap, phone receiver, sports helmet, headband, guitar strap, bra strap, shoulder pads and other tight clothing can lead to acne developing at the point of skin contact.

MENSTRUAL CYCLE

Typically, many people notice that acne flares up in time with their monthly period cycle.

Other triggers can include: excessive sweating, overwashing of the face, certain medications and some kinds of food.



CAUSES

Around puberty, hormones lead to a combination of overactive oil-producing glands and an increase in cells that block oil pores. This leads to the inflammation (redness and swelling) of acne.

Heredity (genes) is another factor determining who gets acne, and how severely. If either or both of your parents had acne you are more likely to develop acne too.



IMPACT

While acne is very common, it can still have a significant psychological impact and cause embarrassment, low self-esteem and can sometimes lead to depression.

SCARRING

The risk of scarring is highest in those with severe acne, those who have had acne for a prolonged time, those with a family history of acne scarring, and those who squeeze or manipulate their acne spots.



TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

- 1 DO wash your face!** Cleanse with gentle cleanser once or twice daily.
- 2 DO apply sunscreen!** Skin is much more sensitive to UV rays when you use acne treatment products.
- 3 DON'T pop!** Picking and squeezing worsens acne. It can also lead to more stains and scars.
- 4 DON'T feel alone.** Nearly everyone in the world gets pimples.

TREATMENT

Your doctor or Certified Dermatologist can help with acne at any stage. Even mild acne can lead to scarring, and there's no way to predict whether mild acne will progress to becoming more severe.

NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS/ OVER-THE-COUNTER (OTC)

These are usually milder than prescription-strength products, and are readily available in retail stores. Examples are medicated cleansers and topical creams and gels. Active ingredients usually include **salicylic acid** or **benzoyl peroxide**.

Tips for Success

- Topical medication should be applied to the entire affected area, not just individual pimples.
- Applying more won't work better or faster, so apply a thin layer evenly.
- Benzoyl peroxide bleaches sheets and clothing. Sleep in older pajamas and use an old pillowcase/towel.
- Keep using the treatment even after acne has visibly improved, to prevent new acne from forming.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

Prescription-strength acne treatments can include topical formulations, such as antibiotics, retinoid creams and gels, benzoyl peroxide and anti-inflammatory medications. Oral medication can include antibiotics, retinoids or hormonal agents (i.e. birth control pills).



**Additional information on Acne
is available online.**

DERMATOLOGY.CA

