

# All About Acne



**A**cne can strike anyone at any time and while not life-threatening, this skin disease can be upsetting, both physically and emotionally. The term acne refers to clogged pores (blackheads and whiteheads), pimples and even deeper lumps (cysts or nodules) that can be found on the face, neck, chest, back, shoulders and even upper arms. Some people inherit acne from a parent or distant relative. Although most people develop acne as teenagers, many don't develop symptoms until early adulthood.

## Facing the Facts



Although acne frequently occurs during puberty because of the body's raging hormones, clogged pores are not restricted to any particular age group — even newborns can be afflicted to a mild degree. The good news is that “break outs” usually disappear by the early 20s, but acne can also linger into adulthood. Here are some facts about nature's equal opportunity disease:

- \* Acne is the most common skin disorder in the U.S., affecting 17 million Americans
- \* Nearly 80 percent of people ages 11-30 have acne
- \* Some scarring develops in 95 percent of people with acne
- \* Acne is among a teenager's biggest worries. A 1994 survey of 1,000 teens found 89 percent of girls and 78 percent of boys worry about acne — however, young men are statistically less likely than young women to seek a dermatologist's help in treating the problem
- \* If a teenager's parents or older siblings have had severe acne, that teenager is likely to have severe acne, too
- \* By their mid-teens, more than 40 percent of adolescents have acne severe enough to require a physician's care
- \* Nearly 30 percent of American women over age 18 suffer from clinical acne — not just an occasional break out, but inflamed lesions that flare up regularly and can sometimes scar
- \* Acne sufferers 35 years and older have significantly increased over the last 10 years
- \* Americans spend more than a hundred million dollars annually for non-prescription acne treatments, excluding special soaps and cleansers

## Zit-Zapping Strategies



Acne is not caused by dirt or the foods you eat. It won't dry up if you bask in the sun, nor will adding a dab of toothpaste take away this vexing problem. “There are a lot of misconceptions about acne,” says Dr. Debra Wattenberg, a New York City dermatologist and member of the Dove Advisory Council. “The main causes of acne are either hormonal or product-related, but people's personal habits can aggravate this common skin condition.”

Dr. Wattenberg offers the following practical tips to help people of all ages keep acne under control:

- ◆ **DON'T SCRUB YOUR SKIN TOO HARD OR FREQUENTLY.** Acne is not usually caused by dirt or surface skin oil, so if you've been scrubbing your skin vigorously, stop. In fact, washing your face too hard or excessively may actually irritate skin, causing it to become dryer and more inflamed. Instead, gently wash your face twice a day using a mild noncomedogenic and nonacnegenic cleanser such as Dove® Beauty Bar, which won't dry skin like soap. Dove is the #1 cleanser recommended by dermatologists.
- ◆ **DON'T DEPRIVE YOURSELF OF FAVORITE FOODS.** There's no scientific evidence that chocolate, peanuts, pizza or french fries cause or influence acne. Of course, eating a well-balanced diet (at least 6-9 servings of fruits and veggies a day) is good for overall health.
- ◆ **AVOID THINGS THAT CAN AGGRAVATE ACNE,** such as harsh cleansers, airborne grease (from cooking) and any clothing or sporting equipment that rubs or applies pressure to acne-prone areas, such as the forehead, chin or nose.
- ◆ **DON'T APPLY HEAVY FOUNDATION MAKEUP.** If you wear a liquid foundation or use a moisturizer, choose one that is water-based, as well as oil- and fragrance-free. Powder blushes and eye shadows are also less irritating to skin than cream products.



- ◆ **WASH MAKEUP BRUSHES ONCE A MONTH.** Use an alcohol-based product or mild cleanser, but first check the brush manufacturer's label for instructions.
- ◆ **SHAMPOO HAIR REGULARLY.** Oily hair needs to be washed more frequently. Also, keep hair pulled back before going to bed, when hair rubs against your face.
- ◆ **SHIELD YOUR FACE WHEN APPLYING HAIRSPRAYS, GELS AND MOUSSES.** If the spray comes into contact with facial skin, it can cause zits.
- ◆ **GET ENOUGH SLEEP.** Inadequate sleep causes physical stress, making it difficult to control acne, so get at least seven to eight hours every night.
- ◆ **SLEEP ON COTTON PILLOWCASES** which are relatively absorbent and clean pillow linens often.
- ◆ **DON'T REST THE PHONE ON YOUR FACE.** If you spend a lot of time on the phone, be sure to clean it every few days with alcohol pads, or switch to a headset.
- ◆ **AVOID SUNBURNS AND SUNLAMPS.** Although a tan can temporarily mask acne, there's no proven evidence that sunlight actually improves acne lesions. Overexposure to ultraviolet light will increase the risk of skin cancer and premature aging, so always wear an oil-free sunscreen.
- ◆ **DON'T PUT THE SQUEEZE ON BLEMISHES.** Or pick, scratch, and pop them. Squeezing acne lesions only forces infected material deeper into the skin, causing additional redness, swelling, inflammation and possible scarring.



Because common acne therapies, such as Retin A®, benzoyl peroxide and erythromycin, can be harsh and irritating to the skin, dermatologists recommend gently – rather than vigorously – washing acne-affected skin to avoid compounding the problem.

A mild, non-soap cleanser is an essential part of the new cleansing routine. Dove is an ideal complement for acne-therapy patients; it causes less skin dryness, roughness and burning than soap.

## *The Dirt on Acne*



Hormones are the real culprits behind acne. During puberty, rising hormone levels cause the oil (sebaceous) glands of the skin to enlarge. (The hormone with the greatest effect on sebaceous glands are androgens, male hormones which are present in both women and men, but in higher amounts in males). Sebaceous glands are found together with a hair shaft in a unit called a sebaceous follicle. The cells of the skin that line the follicle begin to shed more rapidly. In people who develop acne, cells shed and stick together more so than in people who do not develop acne. When cells mix with the increased amount of sebum being produced, they can clog the opening of the follicle.

Meanwhile, the sebaceous glands continue to produce sebum, and the follicle swells up with sebum.

Additionally, a normal skin bacteria called *P. acnes* begins to multiply rapidly in the clogged hair follicle. In the process, these bacteria produce irritating substances that can cause inflammation. Sometimes, the wall of the follicle bursts. Then sebum, bacteria and dead skin cells spill into the skin causing redness, swelling and puss – and thus acne lesions (from blackheads to pimples to nodules) are born.



## *The Dove Advisory Council*

Founded in 1993, the Dove Advisory Council provides consumers and the media with a resource for skin care answers. The Council comprises a network of credentialed medical experts in the fields of dermatology, pediatrics, women's health issues, and research and development, and includes the following members:

- \* DIANE BERSON, M.D., dermatologist, New York City
- \* CLAUDIA HOLLAND, M.D., obstetrician/gynecologist, New York City
- \* KATHERINE KARLSRUD, M.D., pediatrician, New York City
- \* MARC MAYER, D.O., osteopath, Avenel, New Jersey
- \* DEBORAH PARKS, C.P.N.P., pediatric nurse, Houston, Texas
- \* DEBRA WATTENBERG, M.D., dermatologist, New York City

If you would like to schedule an interview with one of the Dove Advisory Council members, please call Bari Seiden at (212) 481-7000 ext. 138.