

ACNE VULGARIS



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What is it?

Acne vulgaris, or acne, is a chronic inflammatory condition of the skin that occurs most often during adolescence, but can occur at any time in life. Although it most often appears on the face, acne can be present on the neck, chest, back and upper arms. Hormonal activity plays a role in the onset of acne and, as a result, acne seems to be more common and persistent in females. In fact, it is not uncommon for women to have problems with acne breakouts well into their thirties and even forties. Acne is a chronic condition and even with adequate treatment, it will tend to flare up from time to time.

Signs and symptoms

- * Blackheads & Whiteheads
- * Pustules - bumps filled with pus
- * Papules - small red bumps
- * Redness and inflamed skin
- * Cysts - large, swollen lesions deeper under the skin
- * Abscess - infected lesion that is swollen, tender, inflamed, filled with pus

Causes

In patients with acne, hormones, genetics, inflammation, bacteria, excessive skin oils and other unknown factors affect oil production and the shedding of skin cells, leading to the oil glands being clogged with excess oil and skin cell debris. When these blockages get large enough, a blackhead or whitehead appears. Eventually the bacteria normally present on skin infect the gland, resulting in an inflamed red bump (papule) or a pimple (pustule). If the blockage occurs deeper in the gland, or if the gland ruptures under the skin, a nodule or cyst occurs. If left untreated, acne can leave permanent scars.

Acne is NOT caused by foods or uncleanliness. Many factors play a role in the timing and severity of breakouts. Acne can be brought on or made worse by sweating and friction on the skin, emotional stress, hormone disorders, some cosmetics, and drugs such as cortisone, hormones, or oral contraceptives. A family history of acne can predict the onset and severity of an individual's acne. Currently, acne cannot be prevented.

Treatment

Most cases of acne will improve once adolescence is over. If your acne does require treatment, your dermatology care provider will work with you to establish the most effective plan of care. Because all patients respond differently to treatment, it may take some trial and error to find the best regimen for you. For best results, it is important that you use medications as directed.

BE PATIENT!

It typically takes six to eight weeks to see improvement with any acne medication. Blackheads and whiteheads have to come to the surface to go away. As a result, you may feel you are getting worse at first, but this is the process necessary to achieve clear

skin. If desired, an acne facial treatment using steam and extractions to remove blackheads may help to improve more stubborn acne lesions and speed up the clearing process.