

Acne

Presentation: most people develop at least some “pimples”
: tends to begin in puberty
: although initially progressive, it tends to resolve as the person gets older (usually late teens/early twenties)
: mainly involves the face, forehead, and back with less involvement of the chest and arms
: severity is frequently related to family history (genetic predisposition)

Etiology: During puberty, hormonal changes cause the oil glands to become more active. This tends to lead to skin pore blockage. The result is a what is frequently called a pimple. There are two types. The first is the ‘white head’. If the white head is opened to air, oxidation occurs and a ‘black head’ is formed. **This is not dirt.** Secondary infection with bacteria is also felt to be contributing factor.

Aggravating Factors: picking at or trying to ‘pop’ the pimples
: excessive washing or using harsh soaps
: some make-ups and hair greases
: occlusive garments including head bands, caps, helmets, and chin straps
: occasionally stress and menstrual periods
: steroid use (an example is that used by weight lifters, not asthmatics)
: consumption of foods with a high Glycemic Index such as white bread and potatoes may be an contributing factor in some individuals
: **rarely** foods such as chocolate and pizza
: consumption of skim milk is no longer felt to be a contributing factor

Treatment: aimed at control (opening the pores/treating infection) – there is no cure
: even with appropriate therapy, the redness noted with acne lesions may get worse initially
: don’t aggressively “exfoliate” or irritate your skin
: don’t pick at the blemishes
: wash the affected area twice a day using either a soap free cleanser or mild soap containing product such as Cetaphil Acne Foam Wash or Dove Unscented, rinse well, and pat (don’t rub) dry
: minimize topical applications such as make-up; when used, choose those that are oil-free and labeled as nonacnegenic or noncomedogenic
: try to keep hair greases off the skin
: minimize occlusive garments such as head bands and baseball caps
: there are many medications available and we will try to find the combination which works best for you with the least risk and inconvenience - the two main categories are irritants (Benzoyl Peroxide, adapalene) and antibiotics (topical and oral)
: when using medications, only use as much as necessary to cover the affected area, more IS NOT better (pea size for creams/ointments or 1/2 pump for “pump” products dabbed on is usually enough for the face)
: due to the risk of “bleaching” when using Benzoyl Peroxide containing products, either put it on in the morning and wash it off before bed OR put it on before bed, use a white pillow case, wear an old shirt, and wash it off in the morning
: the risk of sun burn is usually significantly increased with the topical irritants used, so adequate sun protection including the frequent application of an appropriate sun block is imperative

Follow-Up: Call with a progress report in _____ weeks
: Office visit in _____ weeks