

Acne Care
Pediatric and Adolescent Dermatology
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- 1) Is my acne my fault because I don't wash my face enough or because I eat too much fast food?

No! There is nothing you did to cause your acne. It's caused by a combination of hormones, bacteria (that normally live on your skin, but just like you a lot right now), and sebum (oil production, also related to hormones). However, (and we know you know this already), eating a reasonably healthy diet and getting enough sleep and exercise will definitely help you look and feel better. Sometimes acne also runs in families, so your mom or dad may have had trouble with it too. It's REALLY common (more than 80% of people get it!).

- 2) So how should I wash my face?

We probably either wrote you a prescription for a wash or recommended one. A good over-the-counter wash for blackheads is Neutrogena Oil-Free Acne Wash. However, it has salicylic acid in it (which can be irritating), so if your skin is more sensitive, try a gentler acne wash made by Purpose, Basis, or Cetaphil. You should wash your face twice a day, but go easy! Lots of people make the mistake of scrubbing to try and get "cleaner," but that will only make your acne worse. Just using your hands to wash is great. Same thing goes for picking at or squeezing your skin. Some people are "pickers" (you know who you are!). We know it's hard, but try your best not to, because you're usually sorry you did, right?

- 3) What kind of make-up, lotion, and/or sunscreen should I use?

The key thing to remember for this one is that you want your products to say **non-comedogenic**. A "comedo" is a blackhead or whitehead, so non-comedogenic products are made for people with acne, because they won't plug your pores and make your acne worse. Some good make-up lines are Clinique and Neutrogena, but there are lots of cosmetic companies out

there, so just find the one you like best. The other thing to remember is the stuff you use on your hair. Hair products often cause acne if they accidentally get on your face. If you have more acne on your forehead, think about what might be getting on there.

4) How should I use the prescriptions on my skin?

- a. If your doctor gave you a product for the morning:
Put a thin layer on *after* you wash your face. If you want to wear sunscreen, lotion, or make-up, it's okay, but put it on after the prescription. These products can bleach hair and clothes, so be careful putting your medicine on.
- b. If you were given a nighttime medicine, these products work great, but the biggest mistake people make is using *too much too fast*. They work by unplugging those blackheads and whiteheads. At first they can make your face peel, dry, or red. The key thing to remember with this stuff is that more is NOT better! What you want to do is wash your face, make sure it's completely dry (if it's wet at all, you may feel it burn) and put a tiny (pea-sized amount) on. That should be enough to cover your whole face. Also, if it's your first time to use one of these products, use it every-other night or every 3rd night until you get used to it, then try to work your way up to every night if you can. You may still have some irritation at first, but this will usually get better in 2-3 weeks.
- c. It's very common for your acne to get worse for a short time (first few weeks) before it starts getting better, so hang in there! It's also good to use your prescriptions on your face even in the places you don't have acne, and even when your face clears up, because they (ESPECIALLY the nighttime medicine) will help prevent you from getting acne again. So when you look great, don't stop!

5) I also have acne on my chest and back. Can I use my products there?

Yes! Anything we gave you for your face can be used there too.

6) I was also given antibiotic pills. How long do I have to take them?

Most of the time we want you to take them until you see results (usually 2-3 months). After that, we'll probably start "tapering" you off the medicine. That means not stopping it "cold turkey" but going down to once a day from twice a day, and then every-other day, etc. It's okay to take antibiotics for months, but the problem is, sometimes you'll get "immune" to them, and they'll stop working. Your antibiotics can be

taken with or without food, and can sometimes cause side effects like making your skin more sensitive to the sun. Make sure you wear your sunscreen (non-comedogenic, of course!).

- 7) With all this stuff ya'll gave me and all this work, will be face by clear by tomorrow?

No (though we promise we wish it would!). It really takes about 4-6 weeks until you'll start seeing a difference, so don't give up! The key is getting into a routine. Everybody's busy and misses a day here and there, so don't beat yourself up over it, but try and stick with it most of the time.

- 8) What if I don't like my prescription(s)?

Please call us! Even if it's because of the way it smells or feels, we want to know! Our job is to help you look and feel you best, and part of that is giving you medicine that you *like* and *want* to use. There are LOTS of products out there, but sometimes it takes a little trial and error to find the ones that are best for you, so be patient with us, too!

- 9) My acne is looking better, but what about those red or brown marks left behind?

That's just where your acne has healed, and it will improve with time (may take a few months or longer, though). Make sure you wear a sunscreen too because the sun will make those spots look red or brown longer.

- 10) My acne finally looks great and I'm happy with what I'm using. Do I have to come back to the clinic?

Nope. If it's been within a year since we've seen you, you can have your pharmacy call us for refills. But if it's been greater than a year, you have to come visit us!