



SKIN & BEAUTY CENTER  
Cosmetic, Medical and Surgical Dermatology

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## Acne

What is acne?

More than 90 percent of people will have acne at some point in their lives. Acne lesions form when the opening of oil glands (also known as sebaceous glands) in the skin become blocked and is not able to be released onto the gland, causing inflammation. The swelling within the oil gland can become so intense that the oil gland (and associated hair follicle) can rupture, leading to further inflammation. Acne occurs on the face, as well as the neck, chest, back, shoulders, and upper arms. In people with darker skin tones, acne lesions may be replaced by an area of darker skin (called hyperpigmentation). This discoloration usually lasts a lot longer than the original pimple and can draw considerable embarrassment. Other patients experience permanent and disfiguring scarring from acne. For these reasons, people with acne should be seen by a dermatologist to discuss treatment options and prevent unwanted complications.

When do people develop acne?

For some acne is mild and transient; for others it can be severe and long lasting. Most people develop acne during adolescence due to an increase in hormones during puberty, which causes the oil glands to enlarge and secrete. Middle aged women can also have acne as a result of hormonal imbalances. For many, acne becomes less problematic after the age of 30. It is never a good idea to "wait" for acne to go away. In some instances irreversible scarring takes place which can become permanent and very costly to improve. Diet has little effect on outbreaks. However, cosmetics can aggravate acne so avoiding greasy preparations is important.

What causes acne?

The cause of acne is multifactorial and includes the following:

1. Androgens, such as the hormone testosterone which both males and females have, play an important role in most hormone-sensitive sebaceous glands, which produce oil, known as sebum. Sebum, in turn, has been called "the fuel that feeds the flame of acne."
2. A bacterium called Propionibacterium acnes that is normally present on the skin likely plays a role in acne.
3. Skin cells that don't slough off at a normal rate which results in pores that are clogged with natural oils.
4. Acne may cycle with the menses, and it may improve or worsen during pregnancy.
5. Genetics seem to play a role
6. Stress can trigger the process
7. Diet may have a mild effect on acne. Recent studies show that skim milk and a high glycemic index diet contribute

How is the diagnosis of acne made?

For an experienced dermatologist, the diagnosis of acne is usually straightforward. The type of lesion and the distribution of the lesions is usually characteristic. In adults, however, the diagnosis can be more challenging as acne can overlap with rosacea, allergic reactions, and some kinds of folliculitis. In adults, the underlying cause of the acne may need to be investigated as well.

Acne Treatment

Treatment for acne has improved dramatically in the last 2 decades. SBC offers a wide range of topical and systemic treatments that are individualized for you to maximize your results and minimize unwanted side effects. You and your doctor will decide what is best for your individual needs.



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## Acne

Effective over-the-counter medications include:

1. Salicylic Acid
2. Benzoyl Peroxide preparations.

Prescription acne treatment usually involves a combination of the following topical treatments:

1. Retinoids (such as Differin, Retin A, and Tazorac)
2. Topical antibiotics (Clindamycin, Erythromycin)
3. Prescription-strength Benzoyl Peroxide
4. Aczone
5. Sulfur preparations
6. Combination medications

Systemic treatments includes:

1. The Tetracycline antibiotics (tetracycline, doxycycline, minocycline)
2. Other antibiotics, including Erythromycin and Bactrim.
3. For women, oral contraceptives (birth control) may also improve acne.
4. For adult woman with acne, other hormonal therapies may be considered.
5. Isotretinoin (Accutane) which is very effective and can cure acne but must be used very cautiously under the supervision of a dermatologist because of the risk of severe birth defects when taken during pregnancy.

Other Acne Treatment Options:

1. Light therapy, including Blue light
2. A variety of chemical peels