

## PATIENT INFORMATION

### ACNE

#### ***WHAT IS ACNE?***

Acne is an extremely common skin condition affecting more than half of all adolescents and many adults. It is caused by changes in skin structures consisting of a hair follicle and its associated sebaceous gland, via androgen stimulation. It is characterized by noninflammatory follicular papules or comedones and by inflammatory papules, pustules, and nodules in its more severe forms.

#### ***WHAT CAUSES ACNE?***

Excess oil and sloughed cells plug glands in the skin. These plugged glands become blackheads and whiteheads. Sometimes bacteria inside the plugged glands will multiply and swell up the gland. This causes the plugged gland to become a red or pus-filled pimple or cyst.

Too frequent washing can make acne worse (remember- acne is not caused by dirt). Headbands, hats, bangs, and anything that rubs on the face can in some cases worsen acne as well. Diet, stress, and cosmetics are often blamed for acne flare-ups. While there is no connection between diet and acne, stress and cosmetics may play a minor role. It is probably a good idea to avoid heavy or greasy cosmetics and hair preparations.

Some drugs that can aggravate acne include some birth control pills, anabolic steroids, corticosteroids, phenytoin (Dilantin), iodides, and lithium.

#### ***ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACNE? Yes.***

1. **Noninflammatory acne:** these are also called “blackheads” and “whiteheads”.
2. **Inflammatory acne:** these consist of raised, red lesions and are what many people think of when they hear the word “pimples” or “zits.” These pimples can have white, pus-filled centers.
3. **Nodular cystic acne:** these are large, firm pimples that are greater than half a centimeter in diameter. Inflammation deep within the skin makes these lesions painful, and they are more likely to scar.

### ***WHAT CAN TREAT ACNE?***

Keep your skin clean, but excessive washing can worsen acne. Acne soaps can be harsh and drying, and are generally not recommended. Use a mild soap and dry your skin gently. Try to avoid aggressive squeezing of pimples.

There are a variety of excellent medications that can be used to control acne. These include:

1. **Topical benzoyl peroxide** is the most effective medication available without a prescription. If there is no improvement with its use, or if your condition worsens, a physician can provide additional medication and guidance.
2. **Retin-A** helps to unplug glands and prevent blackheads and whiteheads from developing.
3. **Oral & topical antibiotics** kill bacteria that cause inflammation and are useful when the acne is inflamed and raised.
4. **Accutane** is a more aggressive therapy for acne. Because of the possibility of numerous serious side effects, it is reserved for severe cases that are resistant to other treatments. Accutane reduces oil production and increases cell shedding to keep glands clear.

All acne treatments, even those prescribed by a doctor, take at least four to six weeks to begin improving your condition, and sometimes even longer. Be patient for results. It is important that you follow your treatment program every day.