



Acne

Acne is the most common skin disorder affecting more than 80% of people at some time between the ages of 11 and 30. Acne begins in puberty when hormones stimulate your oil glands to produce more sebum (the oil that plugs your pores). Chocolate, milk and high-fat foods do NOT cause acne. This is a myth.

Causes

1. Oil - oil glands (a.k.a. sebaceous glands) enlarge in adolescence with an overproduction of oil (sebum)
2. Hair follicles get plugged with dry/dead skin producing white heads and black heads.
3. Bacteria - normal bacteria that live on our skin called *Cutibacterium acnes* that grows well on this environment and causes little, micro infections. These little areas of infection are pimples.

Each pimple has a life span of 6-8 weeks so any treatment must go for at least 8 weeks before assessing effectiveness.

Fixes - 80% of acne can be managed if you do the following:

1. Wash your face twice a day with a mild, non-soap cleanser. My favorite is Olay 4-in-1 Normal Daily Facial Cloths. If you can only do one, the most important time to wash is at bedtime. Avoid scrubbing your skin because it irritates the opening of the oil glands and can cause them to close.
2. Manage bacteria with Benzoyl Peroxide. This agent can be very drying so start off slowly and build up gradually. Start with a thin application one time a day, every other day. Recommended brand: 2.5% Benzoyl Peroxide Dr. Song Acne Gel Treatment lotion.
3. Dry skin is just as bad as oily skin in terms of causing acne. Everyone needs an oil-free, hypoallergenic moisturizer with sunscreen. My favorite is Olay Complete All Day Moisturizer with Sunscreen Broad Spectrum SPT 15 - Sensitive
4. Shampoo your hair daily. Long hair can make acne worse by rubbing against your skin. Also avoid hair gels, creams, and sprays. When you sweat, these substances will spread to your face and aggravate your acne.
5. Avoid the sun – Yes, the sun will dry up some of the acne that you currently have but it will be at the expense of more pimples in 2 weeks. Sunburned/tanned skin = dry skin = more acne. My favorite sunscreen – Jack Black Sun Guard Sunscreen SPF 45 Oil-Free & Very Water Resistant.

Prescription Stuff – All prescriptions are in addition to the above fixes. If you aren't doing the above steps yet, get started before bothering with prescriptions. If you are doing the above steps, then keep going and call us for a prescription:

1. Topical
 - a. Tretinoin or Retinoic acid. Retin-A External Cream 0.025%. Apply to clean, dry skin once a day. Some people start with every other day for 4 weeks and then increase to every day. Works well, but can be very drying (and dry skin can cause acne). Your skin will burn easier in the sun when you use this medicine.
 - b. Topical Antibiotics – Cleocin T 1% solution. Soak a cotton ball with the solution and apply to affected skin. Use after you've cleaned and dried your skin but before moisturizers and Retin A.
2. Oral Therapy

- a. Oral Antibiotics – more effective than topical but have more side effects. Doxycycline 100mg once a day. Contact our office if you have severe stomach upset or if you have vaginal itching.
- b. Hormonal Therapy (aka OCP or the pill). can be very effective in women who have already started their periods. You cannot take this medicine if you smoke cigarettes or any other product.
- c. Isotretinoin (Accutane) – this is an oral form of vitamin A that can be extremely effective. This medicine has some significant side effects that can be handled relatively easily. If you are a candidate for this treatment, we will refer you to a dermatologist.

What will the dermatologist do? We will refer you to a dermatologist if acne persists despite above therapies. For some people, finding the right combination of interventions requires a specialist.

Who we recommend?

Melissa Abrams – Rockville - 301-681-7000

Sara Brooks – Gaithersburg 301-208-2273

Lawrence Green – Rockville 301-610-0663