

MYTH: WASH YOUR FACE OFTEN AND SCRUB HARD.

Truth: Overwashing your face actually makes acne worse because the skin overcompensates after frequent washes and becomes more oily, thus causing increased acne. Scrubbing acne too hard actually inflames blackheads, so be sure to use gentle cleansing and do not scrub vigorously.

MYTH: USE MAKEUP TO HELP COVER ACNE.

Truth: While it is tempting to try to hide acne with makeup, these products contribute to clogging of your pores, which can cause more pimples and blackheads. If you decide to wear makeup, do not cover breakouts and use oil-free products that say "noncomedogenic" or "nonacnegenic" on the label. Consider light, loose powder foundations instead of thick liquid foundation and pancake products that can clog pores. Cleanse the skin before going to bed. Throw away old makeup that smells or looks different from when you first bought it.

TRUTH & MYTHS OF ACNE

MYTH: SUNSCREEN WILL AGGRAVATE ACNE.

Truth: You just have to pick the right sunscreen. Chemical sunscreens, like Helioplex, dissipate UV light using a chemical reaction, which may cause heat bumps. People prone to acne should use a physical sunscreen like zinc oxide instead.

MYTH: TANNING HELPS CLEAR ACNE.

Truth: Tanning does help hide acne, but ultraviolet (UV) rays ultimately dry the skin, and can make the skin condition worse. And do we really need to remind you that tanning causes premature aging not to mention skin cancer?

MYTH: IT IS OK TO POP BLACKHEADS.

Truth: While tempting, popping pimples can push infected material further into the skin, which will lead to more swelling and redness, and even scarring.

MYTH: ACNE IS JUST A COSMETIC PROBLEM.

Truth: Acne can have lasting impact on how you feel about yourself -- and left untreated or improperly managed, can leave permanent scars. There are many treatments available for acne, and your dermatologist can prescribe the right option for you.



Acne is a common skin disease that occurs when hair follicles get plugged with dead skin cells and sebum, which is produced by the oil glands. Then bacteria may accumulate and lead to inflammation resulting in pimples that cause redness and discomfort and may lead to scarring. Acne typically affects skin on the face, the upper part of the chest, and the back.

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WHO GETS ACNE?

According to the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), acne is the most common skin problem in the United States. About 40-50 million Americans have acne at any one time. While most people with acne are teenagers or young adults, acne can occur at any age. Newborn babies can get acne. Men and women get acne. Should acne develop during middle age, your doctor should determine whether the condition is acne or some other inflammatory problem such as rosacea, to ensure proper treatment.



Nutrition Tips: The right foods can minimize the pore blockage, excess oil production, inflammation, and bacterial infection that characterize acne.

- Eat a diet comprised of whole (*not processed*) foods. Boost your intake of fresh fruits and vegetables as they contain several compounds like antioxidants that have a calming affect on the skin. Drink lots of water for hydration and opt for foods rich in Omega-3 fatty acids, including walnuts, beans, flaxseed oil and cold-water oily fish like salmon. Some research suggests that foods rich in vitamin A and beta-carotene can also improve the health of your skin. Carrots, sweet potatoes, cantaloupe, apricots, kale and spinach all have a high vitamin A content.
- Avoid fried foods, alcohol and foods with a high glycemic load, like white bread, pastries and soda. These foods spike your blood sugar levels, which cause the pancreas to make extra insulin to regulate blood sugar levels but also stimulates sebum production that can cause skin breakouts. Drinks and foods with caffeine cause dehydration and can contribute to acne. Animal products with added growth hormones stimulate the development of sebum and make skin breakouts more likely. Research has also shown that acne may be related to gluten and dairy consumption and to deficiencies in vitamins A, E, zinc and selenium.
- Research aside, you are the only one who knows the true relationship between your diet and your skin. To find out which foods affect your skin, keep a food journal for a month with notations on your skin condition and see if a pattern emerges.

THE MANY “FACES” OF ACNE:

- Mild acne includes open comedones (*blackheads*), dark spots with open pores at the center, and closed comedones (*whiteheads*), bulged spots under the skin without openings. The dark color in blackheads is from skin pigment and dead skin cells, not dirt.
- Moderate and severe inflammatory types of acne occur when plugged follicles are invaded by bacteria within the hair follicles and become inflamed. These inflamed areas are called papules; when deeper, they are called pustules.
- The most severe type of acne consists of inflamed fluid-filled lumps under the skin (*cysts*) and hard swellings (*nodules*).
- Left unchecked, acne can leave discolored areas and permanent scars. Certain esthetic and cosmetic procedures may be available to improve the appearance of the skin.

Albany Dermatology offers a VISIA Complexion Analysis and esthetic consultation to identify services, skin care products and home care for your skin.

Skin Care and Treatment: A consistent and individualized home program can curb bacterial growth on your skin, calm irritation and hormonal influences, and address skin breakouts.

- For mild acne, over-the-counter (OTC) cleansers and topical treatments containing benzoyl peroxide, sulfur or salicylic acid may cause skin irritation, dryness and flaking that often improves after the first month of therapy. A glycolic acid solution can also help dry oily skin and remove superficial clogged pores (*whiteheads and blackheads*).
- Topical treatments such as retinoids, available by prescription, promote cell turnover and prevent plugging of the hair follicles. Topical antibiotics destroy excess skin bacteria that lead to inflammatory lesions (*pimples and pustules*). For more significant lesions (*papules, pustules and cysts*), prescription oral antibiotics combined with benzoyl peroxide or retinoids reduce bacteria and fight inflammation. Hormonal therapy such as oral contraceptives may improve difficult acne in female patients. Often, a combination of products is required to achieve optimal results.
- Acne surgery may be an option for large acne cysts that do not respond to other treatment. In some instances, inflammatory nodules and cysts may be treated with intralesional steroid injections.
- Isotretinoin (Accutane) is an oral medication used only to treat severe, recalcitrant, or scarring forms of acne. Your doctor can discuss the possible side effects if you are considering taking Accutane.

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