

# Acne Treatments

## What is acne?

Acne is the most common skin disorder in the United States. It is a long-term condition that involves the oil glands around each hair. Hairs grow from a follicle, which can become plugged by oil. Once the follicle is plugged, germs invade and cause bumps that can fill with pus and become red, swollen, and sometimes painful.

Acne can range from mild to very bad. People of all ages can get it, including newborns and older adults. Acne is most common on the face, back, neck, and chest.

## How is acne treated?

There is no cure for acne, but you can treat the symptoms by keeping hair follicles from getting plugged. Once a bump has formed, you can use medicines that help with the redness and swelling.

The most common type of acne medicine is a cream or gel that you put on your skin. Many of these can be bought without a prescription. These medicines may help if your acne is mild. Benzoyl peroxide is the most common type. It is in most over-the-counter acne medicines.

If over-the-counter medicines don't work, your doctor can prescribe other types of medicine. These are usually antibiotics or

retinoids. These medicines can cause dryness or redness. If this becomes a problem for you, your doctor can tell you ways to make your skin feel better.

If you have very bad acne, your doctor may prescribe pills. You may need to take these for several months before your skin gets better.

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### Notes:

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**This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.**

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