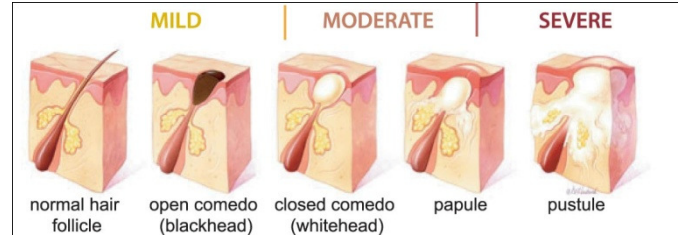


# ACNE

Acne is the most common skincare problem seen by doctors. It occurs when pores become clogged by a combination of an oily substance produced by the skin (called sebum), dirt, and dead skin cells. Often bacteria called *P. acnes* can be present, which can contribute to the redness, swelling and pus that can accompany lesions. The visible result is acne, which is the term used to describe blackheads, whiteheads, pimples, and cysts. Acne usually appears on the face and neck but can include shoulders, back and arms.

**Stages of Acne:** mild acne consists of a few lesions that are close to the surface and not inflamed. Moderate acne is marked by deeper lesions that cover more of the face and have some redness. Severe acne involves many lesions, multiple cysts, lots of redness and inflammation over most of the face.



## What can trigger flare-ups?



There are a number of triggers that can make acne flare up or lead to "breakouts" and these vary from person to person. Triggers include everything from make-up and hair care products that block the pores, to physical pressure from sports helmets, sweating, over-washing, medications, menstrual cycle in girls, picking or squeezing, and certain foods.

## What are different kinds of treatments?

No matter how mild or short-lived acne can be, seeking treatment sooner rather than later is key to getting it under control and limiting the chances of permanent scarring. There is no telling whether a mild case of acne will progress to a more severe form, continue to adulthood, or disappear by the end of the teen years.

### Non-prescription Medications:

Wash with mild soaps to reduce inflammation and dryness (ie. Dove, Aveeno, Cetaphil). For mild acne, over-the-counter treatments may be used. These are milder than prescription-strength products your doctor may give you. These can range from bar soaps to washes to topical creams. The active ingredients usually include benzoyl peroxide in various concentrations under 5%. These treatments kill bacteria and cause drying and slight peeling of the skin. This medication also causes staining of material so old pillowcases and towels should be used. Salicylic acid creams can also be used to reduce the inflammation.

### Prescription Medications:

**Topical creams** - benzoyl peroxide in stronger strengths (10%) can be prescribed as a wash, bar soap, or topical lotion or cream. Another effective treatment includes Tretinoin (Vitamin A) topical creams (ie. Retin-A/Stieva-A) that comes in various strengths and reduces inflammation and increases cell turnover.

**Topical antibiotics** - (ie. Clindamycin, erythromycin) can be recommended to control the redness and swelling of acne. These can also be combined with other topic creams (ie. Benzaclin/Clindoxyl, Stievamycin).

**Oral antibiotics** - (ie. Tetracycline, minocycline, doxycycline) are usually indicated for moderate to severe acne of the chest, back, or shoulders. They work by decreasing the presence of the *P.acnes* bacteria. These treatments often need to be tried for 3-6 months and may cause nausea, diarrhea, and photosensitivity.

**Hormonal agents** - including oral contraceptives are recommended to girls for moderate and severe acne after other treatments have failed. This responds best to acne triggered by menstrual cycle occurring along the jawline.

**Oral Retinoids** are vitamin A derivatives (ie. Accutane) are prescribed to treat severe cases of acne that does not respond well to other treatment options. This medication has many possible side effects including headaches, muscle aches, photosensitivity, and dryness. Occasional reports of depression have been documented. This medication can have effects on the liver and cholesterol levels therefore requiring monthly monitoring by bloodwork and avoiding alcohol while on the medication. **This medication is 100% harmful in pregnancy** therefore requires women of child-bearing age to be on 2 forms of birth control while on this medication. Treatment generally lasts 3-6 months