

# UAB Health Education

## STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

### ACNE



Acne is a common skin condition that occurs when your hair follicles become plugged with sebum, an oily substance, and dead skin cells. This allows bacteria to grow and irritate the skin. It often causes blackheads, whiteheads, or pimples and most commonly affects the face, chest and back. It usually starts in the teenage years and can last into adulthood.

#### RISK FACTORS

- Age: most commonly in teenagers and young adults
- Family history of acne
- Certain medications
- Hormonal changes, especially during menstrual periods or pregnancy
- Stress

#### SYMPTOMS

- Whiteheads: accumulation of sebum deep below skin surface
- Blackheads: clogged pores that rise to the surface of the skin
- Pustules: pimple, occurs when walls of blocked hair follicle rupture
- Cysts: form deep in the skin, are a painful, pus-filled, more extensive infection that may result in scars

#### DIAGNOSIS

Your provider will ask you about your symptoms and examine your skin.

#### TREATMENT

There are many treatments to control acne and reduce breakouts.

##### Topical medications:

- **Benzoyl peroxide** kills bacteria and is most effective for pustules. Excessive use can cause drying and redness.
- **Salicylic acid** effectively treats non-inflammatory acne. It may be irritating to the skin.
- **Retinoids:** Retin A, Differin. These can make the skin more sun-sensitive, so be sure to wear sunscreen.
- **Antibiotics:** erythromycin, clindamycin. Most effective when used with benzoyl peroxide.

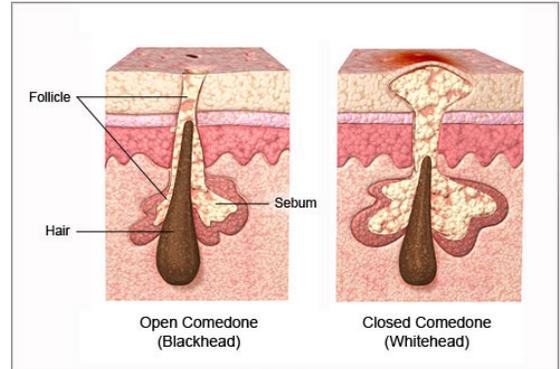
##### Oral medications:

- **Antibiotics:** Doxycycline, erythromycin, minocycline. Useful for moderate to severe acne.
- **Oral contraceptives:** can clear acne by decreasing circulating hormones called androgens and thereby decreasing sebum production.
- **Spironolactone:** works by decreasing androgen production
- **Isotretinoin:** Accutane. Potent medication for severe cystic acne that has failed treatment by other methods.

#### RESOURCES

**FamilyDoctor.org** <https://familydoctor.org/condition/acne/>

**Mayo Clinic** <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/acne/symptoms-causes/syc-20368047>



#### PREVENTION

- Wash your face no more than twice daily with a gentle non-soap facial cleanser. Avoid vigorous washing and scrubbing, which can damage the skin's surface.
- Do not prick or squeeze pimples because this can worsen acne and cause swelling and scarring. It can also cause lesions to become infected
- Use noncomedogenic (non-pore clogging) moisturizer, especially with some skin treatments that cause dryness.
- Keep your hair clean and off your face. Avoid resting your face in your hands.