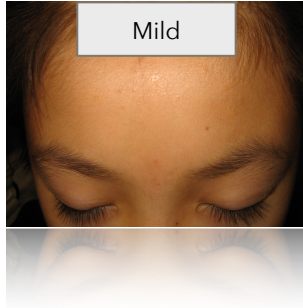


# ACNE

## What is acne and why do I have pimples?

The medical term for “pimples” is acne or acne vulgaris (vulgaris means “common”). Most people get some acne. Acne does not come from being dirty; rather, it is an expected consequence of changes that occur during normal growth and development. Hormones, bacteria, and your family’s tendency to have acne may all play a role.



Mild



Moderate



Severe

## What causes my acne?

There are four contributors to acne—the body’s natural oil (sebum), clogged pores, bacteria (with the scientific name *Cutibacterium acnes*, or *C. acnes*, for short), and the body’s reaction to the bacteria living in the clogged pores (which causes inflammation). Here’s what happens:

(1) Sebum is produced in the normal oil-making glands in the deeper layers of the skin and reaches the surface through the skin’s pores. An increase in certain hormones occurs around the time of puberty, and these hormones trigger the oil glands to produce increased amounts of sebum.

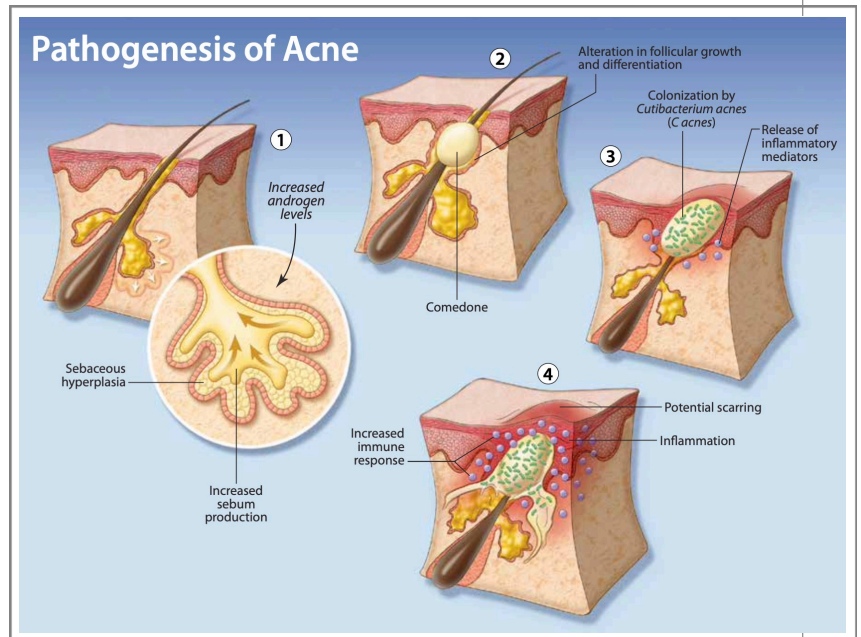
(2) Pores with excess oil tend to become clogged more easily.

(3) At the same time, *P. acnes*—one of the many types of bacteria that normally live on everyone’s skin—thrives in the excess oil

(4) The buildup of *P. acnes* causes a skin reaction (inflammation).

» A plug that extends to, or forms a little deeper in the pore, or one that enlarges or ruptures may cause more inflammation. The result is red bumps (papules) and pus-filled pimples (pustules).

» If plugging happens in the deepest skin layer, the inflammation may be even more severe, resulting in the formation of nodules or cysts. When these types of acne heal, they may leave behind discoloured areas or true scars.



## TIPS FOR WASHING THE SKIN

Good skin hygiene is important to support any acne treatment plan. Here are several suggestions for practicing good skin hygiene to keep your skin looking its best:

- » Everyone with acne should wash the skin twice a day: once in the morning and once in the evening. This includes any showers you take.
- » Use a gentle cleanser or soap to wash your face. Do not use harsh scrubs or exfoliating products with microbeads as these can cause irritation to the skin. Avoid using harsh, deodorant soaps, as well.
- » Do not scrub the skin with a washcloth or loofah as these can irritate your acne. Acne does not come from "dirt", so it is not necessary to scrub the skin clean. In fact, scrubbing may lead to dryness and irritation that makes the acne even worse and harder for patients to tolerate acne medications.
- » Over-the-counter "acne washes" often contain salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide. These ingredients can be helpful in clearing oil from the skin and reducing bacteria, but they may also be drying and can add to irritation. Hold off using these products unless specifically recommended by your doctor.
- » Wash the skin as soon as possible after playing sports or other activities that cause a lot of sweating. Also, pay attention to how your sports equipment (shoulder pads, helmet strap, etc.) might be making your acne worse.
- » When you use makeup, moisturizer, or sunscreen make sure that these products are labeled "non-comedogenic", or "won't clog pores", or "won't cause acne".
- » Try not to "pop pimples" or pick at your acne as this can delay healing and may result in scarring or dark spots. Picking/ popping acne can also cause a serious skin infections.
- » Wash or change your pillow case once to twice a week, especially if you use products in your hair.
- » Facials and other treatments to remove, squeeze, or "clean out" pores are not recommended. Manipulating the skin in this way can make acne worse and can lead to severe infections and/or scarring. It also increases the likelihood that the skin will not be able to tolerate acne medications.

## TIPS FOR APPLYING THE MEDICINE

- » Apply your medication to clean, dry skin. Wait 15-20 minutes after washing before applying the medicine.
- » When putting acne creams on the face, use the "5-dot" method. Put a small pea-sized amount of the medication on your finger. Then, place "dots" on these 5 locations: mid-forehead, each cheek, nose, and chin. Next, rub the medication into the entire area of skin - not just on pimples! Avoid the delicate skin around your eyes and corners of your mouth.
- » If your medications make your skin too dry, try using them "every other night" or even "every third night." Gradually work up to daily.
- » Moisturizer, sunscreen, and make-up may be used with topical acne medications. In general, acne medications are applied first.
- » It is especially important to always use sunscreen when using a topical retinoid or oral antibiotic. These medicines can make your skin more sensitive to the sun. In general, sunscreen gets applied AFTER any acne medications.
- » Don't stop using your acne medications just because your acne got better. Remember, the acne is better because of the medication, and prevention is the key to treatment.