

Riley Speaks

Treatment Approaches for Your Child's Acne

About 85 percent of people between the ages 15 and 24 battle acne breakouts—making it the most common skin disease in teenagers and young adults. Whether your child has a few pimples or a severe case of acne, here's information to help you discuss treatment options with your doctor.

WHAT CAUSES ACNE?

Doctors don't know for certain what causes acne, but many factors are at play in its development. Tiny canals called hair follicles connect the pores in your skin to glands beneath the skin. These glands produce oil, which travels the hair follicle carrying dead skin cells to the surface. Acne develops when a hair follicle gets clogged with oil and dead skin cells. The result is a pimple.

Acne varies widely in type and severity from one person to another. According to the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, the most common types of pimples are:

- whiteheads (pimples below the skin's surface)
- blackheads (pimples at the skin's surface that appear black)
- papules (small pink bumps)
- pustules (pimples that have a pus-filled top)
- nodules (large, painful pimples that go deep into the skin)
- cysts (larger, deep, painful lesions that can cause scarring).

HOW IS ACNE TREATED?

The goals of acne treatment are to heal current pimples and prevent new ones. Often this can be achieved with over-the-counter products, as well as with prescription medicines — including medication that's applied directly to the skin or taken orally.

Your doctor also might recommend combination therapy, which includes using two or more medications at the same time. Combination therapies generally are the most effective in treating acne.

WHAT'S THE BEST TREATMENT OPTION FOR MY CHILD?

You should speak with your pediatrician, family physician or a dermatologist to determine the best approach for treating your child's acne. The best treatment approach is individualized — meaning what works well for one person may not work for another. That's why it's important to talk with your child's physician to develop an effective treatment plan.



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CLEARING UP MYTHS ABOUT ACNE

Some people believe that eating greasy food or chocolate will cause acne. But that's not true. Nor are these other common myths:

Myth: Stress causes acne.

Truth: Stress doesn't appear to cause acne, but higher stress levels may increase its severity.

Myth: Treating acne isn't necessary because kids will outgrow it.

Truth: Not all children or young adults will outgrow acne. In fact, adult acne is fairly common. In addition, early treatment is the best way to prevent acne scars.

Myth: Acne is the result of poor hygiene.

Truth: Not the case. In fact, overwashing or scrubbing the face can actually make acne worse.

Myth: You'll know right away if an acne medicine is working.

Truth: Most acne medicines begin working immediately. However, you may not see a significant difference in the skin's appearance for several weeks. And, sometimes, acne might appear to get worse before it gets better. Be patient, and follow your doctor's treatment recommendations.



PRACTICING GOOD SKIN CARE

In addition to medication, good skin care can help improve acne. Here are some helpful tips:

- Be gentle when cleansing your skin.
- Don't squeeze, pick or "pop" pimples. This can leave scars.
- It's best to stay out of the sun, as many acne medicines increase your susceptibility to sunburn. The sun also will make darkly pigmented spots more noticeable. If you are in the sun, use a non-acnegenic sunscreen.

For more information, visit rileyhospital.org



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