

# BEATING THE ACNE PROBLEM

2007 Edition

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## CHAPTER 1 – UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACNE

Though all pimples form the same way, they often take on different shapes and characteristics, and react differently on different people.

Acne is formed when a hair follicle becomes clogged and what is called a comedo is formed. As the follicle becomes clogged with more oil, the comedo becomes larger, inflaming the skin around the area and forming what we know of as a pimple.

There are several types of acne, each requiring different methods of treatment. This chapter covers some of those types, explaining each and making treatment suggestions.

Non-inflammatory acne often takes the form of a closed comedo, or whitehead. This occurs when the plugged hair follicle stays beneath the surface of the skin, and appears on the skin as a small whiteish bump.

An open comedo, or blackhead, occurs when the plug enlarges and pushes through the surface of the skin. Its dark appearance is not due to dirt, but rather to a build up of the dark pigment of the skin called melanin. Blackheads are also a type of inflammatory acne.

The mildest form of inflammatory acne is a papule, a small, firm, pink bump appearing on the surface of the skin. These bumps can be tender to the touch, and are often considered an intermediary step between non-inflammatory and inflammatory acne.

Pustules are like papules in that they are small, round lesions. Unlike papules, pustules are clearly inflamed and visibly contain pus. They may appear red at the base with a yellowish or whiteish center. Pustules do not generally contain a great deal of bacteria, but are inflamed due to chemical irritation from sebum components.

Nodular or cystic acne is usually very painful. Nodules are inflamed pus-filled lesions lodged deep within the skin. They develop when the contents of a comedo has spilled into the surrounding skin and immune system responds, producing pus.

The most severe form of this type of acne may persist for weeks or even months, eventually hardening into a cyst. Both nodules and cysts often leave deep scars.

Acne conglobata, a rare form of inflammatory acne, forms primarily on the back, buttocks, and chest. It is characterized by pustules and nodules, and severe bacterial infection may ensue.

Acne cosmetica is a relatively mild form of acne caused from topical cosmetic products. It is characterized by small pink bumps, and local inflammation on the cheek, chin, and forehead. It may develop over the course of a few weeks or months, but usually does not cause scarring. Since it can persist indefinitely, it is important to find out which topical products are causing the problem and eliminate their use.

It is important to understand what is causing your acne so a suitable treatment can be found. Before you can solve the problem, you must know its origin.

## CHAPTER 2 – THE TRUE CAUSE OF ACNE

There are many possible causes for acne. People of all ages, lifestyles, and backgrounds can develop it, and the causes can be different for each.

The first step to understanding what is causing your acne is knowing your skin type and how to care for it. If you have oily skin, you wouldn't want to use a facial cleanser containing oil because your body is already producing a good amount of it.

Likewise, if your skin is dry, you wouldn't want to necessarily use a product that is oil free. Perhaps, one of the most common myths is that oily skin does not need to be moisturized. Oil is not moisture, and skin needs moisture. Determining the cause and caring for your type of acne, as well as properly caring for your skin is crucial in curing acne.

This chapter covers some of the possible causes of acne and how to help determine what might be causing yours.

The skin is the largest organ in the human body. Like all other organs, proper care must be given to ensure it works correctly.

Topical treatments are those used on the surface of the skin. By helping to keep pores open, eliminating excess dirt and oil, and getting rid of unwanted bacteria, these may do the trick. There are other medications that can be taken orally to help eliminate excess oils by keeping the body from producing it, along with various other medical remedies that help treat acne.

Before you can treat it, however, you need to understand what is causing it.

Hormones can play a major part in causing acne. In adolescence, the changes the body goes through can cause constant breakouts, while in adult years, bodily changes, such as premenstrual and pre menopausal episodes, can cause breakouts to continue. While any hormonal excess can promote acne, the male hormones are most notorious for doing so.

The body can then produce more oil, which can block pores and cause breakouts. Using products that help eliminate or control oil may be helpful in curing acne with this cause.

Stress can also be a contributing factor to the presence of acne. When you are stressed, the body releases certain hormones and chemicals which can produce toxicities that cause acne. Try to eliminate stress by staying away from stressful situations.

It is also believe that some foods, such as chocolate and sugar can cause acne. While this is commonly disputed and often thought to be a myth, it is unclear whether these

foods are unable to actually cause acne. Ask a physician if you want to know more about this as a possible cause.

Because there are many types of acne, there can be many causes.

Environment can influence acne, as well as lifestyle. The products you use can also effect your acne. If you are not using the proper products to counteract acne, you may see an increase in breakouts.

As mentioned above, if your skin is oily, you don't want to use products containing excess oil, as this would add to the oil on your skin and could clog pores and cause further breakouts. It is also important to keep the skin properly hydrated and moisturized.

Learn how to care for your particular skin type and try to eliminate the factors that are causing your acne. This will help you have healthier skin.

## CHAPTER 3 – HYGIENE PRODUCTS AND YOUR ACNE

Acne is one of the most common skin conditions and is prevalent among both teens and adults. There are many products available to treat acne, some of which are common to personal hygiene. The most common of these is soap.

While many soaps, especially those that are scented, can irritate skin afflicted by acne, many hygiene products have been put on the market that are helpful in combating acne, and are economical as well.

Soaps come in two forms, bar and liquid. Facial soaps and cleansers are those products designed to treat problem skin. They contain products that promote healing and prevention.

Acne cleansers are generally used to remove excess oil, dirt, and sweat from the surface of the skin. When this happens, it makes absorption of topical acne treatment easier.

Topical products are those used on the surface of the skin to combat acne. Excessive cleansing with such products can dry and irritate the skin, therefore, making the acne worse, it is advised to only cleanse with these products once or twice a day.

There are different cleansers for different skin types.

People with oily skin should use cleansers that rinse off well. This is so the excess oil common to oily skin will be properly removed, leaving the skin smooth. Both bar soaps and liquid cleansers have been specially formulated for this purpose.

For dry skin, the use of hard-milled products and gentle cleansers are appropriate. You may wish to use synthetic detergents if you have this skin type. Such cleansers do not necessarily need to be used often, as they are sometimes stronger than other products.

Most people with normal skin can cleanse daily with bar soaps. Synthetic detergents do, however, react better to hard water.

If you have sensitive skin, you are more prone to react to fragrant products, and those with grains or scrubbing agents. Stay away from the use of such products. Instead, use gentle cleansers and be careful how hard you wash. Wipe, do not scrub when removing dirt and oil from your skin.

There are many gentle cleansers available for use for skin that is easily irritated or aggravated. There are also several types of acne cleansers appropriate for daily skin care that are available for purchase over-the-counter.

Oil-free and non-cometigenic products are usually advisable, as these do not clog pores.

There are also cosmetics that have been developed to promote acne healing and daily prevention. Like many cleansers, many of these are oil-free and some contain a small amount of acne medication.

No matter what type of cleanser you choose, whether it is soap or a special cleanser especially developed to help combat acne, be careful in how you use it. Follow the directions on the bottle or box, and be sure not to over wash. You will be on your way to controlling your acne.

## CHAPTER 4 – OVER THE COUNTER IDEAS FOR TREATING ACNE

There are many products designed to treat acne. Some of these products are formulated to serve a specific purpose while others are dedicated to treating the general symptoms of acne.

This chapter discusses some of the basic products sold over-the-counter that can help prevent and combat acne. Remember, if products sold in most drugstores aren't helping your condition, it may be advisable to seek medical attention.

Soap and water is the most basic product to help fight acne. Depending on your skin type, sensitivity, and possible allergies, you may want to choose a soap carefully so as to prevent further breakouts or irritation.

When you wash your face, you are removing excess oils that build up on your skin, clogging pores and causing pimples to form. Although it is strongly recommended that you not wash your face too often, and that you don't scrub vigorously, as this can remove too much oil and irritate the skin, washing your face twice or even three times daily can remove unwanted dirt and oils and help control your breakouts.

Benzoyl peroxide is another very common remedy that can be purchased over-the-counter to help fight acne. It is often recommended by physicians, it is usually used to treat mild forms of acne. It is present in many acne treatment products, and was the first product to be proven effective in treating acne.

Benzoyl Peroxide is helpful in fighting bacteria and stops excess oil from clogging pores. It is available in the forms of a lotion or a cream.

Salicylic acid is commonly used in many over-the-counter acne cleansers and treatments, and when applied to the skin, helps to correct the abnormal shedding of cells. In milder forms of acne, it helps to unclog pores and prevent lesions we know of as pimples.

Salicylic acid does not stop oil production. Like Benzoyl Peroxide, it must be used continually in order to see its effects.

Sulfur is also another common product found in many over-the-counter acne treatments. It has been used for years in conjunction with other products to help combat acne. Due to its unpleasant odor, sulfur is less often used by itself to treat acne.

Although it is widely used, and common in many treatments, it is not known exactly what characteristics help heal acne. Nevertheless, results have been shown and it continues to be used.

Herbal and natural products are often available for purchase over-the-counter to treat acne. Most of these products are organic, and have not been tested clinically to determine their effectiveness. In spite of this, they are sometimes preferred, and their usage is said to be increasing.

There are many over-the-counter options available to help heal and prevent acne. Different products react differently to different skin types, and the effects are different for everyone. It is important to find what works for you and stick to it.

## CHAPTER 5 – PRODUCTS TO AVOID WHEN TREATING ACNE

There are many over-the-counter products available for treating and helping to prevent acne.

Some are developed specifically for this purpose, and contain acne medications and substances designed to unclog pores and reduce the chances of acne from developing.

Others are simply cleansers, designed to do nothing more than cleanse the skin and remove excess oils and dirt, which helps control breakouts.

So which products are helpful, and which could actually be harmful to your skin? Soap is one of the most basic products used to cleanse the skin, and for some people is okay to use on acne afflicted areas.

It can, however, aggravate these areas depending on one's skin type, skin sensitivity, and actual acne condition. That is why it is important to use a cleanser that will work best with these factors. This will help you avoid further irritation to the skin and will promote faster healing.

If you have sensitive skin, stay away from fragrant soaps, as the chemicals in them can cause breakouts. If your skin is oily, use soaps that are virtually oil-free, as products containing a substantial amount of oil will add oil to your skin, causing the pores to become clogged and subsequent breakouts to occur.

Cosmetics can cause acne to worsen.

Certain makeup products contain chemicals that while on the skin, clog the pores and irritate the skin, causing breakouts. If you are suffering more breakouts than normal, or if you feel something is irritating your skin, you may want to find out what is in your cosmetic products that might be causing this to occur.

Instead, use cosmetics that are non-comedogenic, meaning they won't clog your pores. If a product irritates your skin, stop using it and find one that doesn't.

Product containers now contain information about what is in the product, and what it should be used for, and often times, what skin types it works best on. You can gain information by reading these labels.

As mentioned above, remember not to over wash your skin, as this can cause it to become irritated and breakouts to occur. Also, wash gently. Harsh scrubbing will not remove any more dirt and oil than gentle scrubbing, and will also cause irritation.

Do not squeeze pimples, as this causes the bacteria to go deeper within the skin, and the area around the pimple to become irritated and inflamed. Instead, cleanse the area and use a toner to alleviate the problem and bring out the pus.

Be sure to choose your acne products carefully. You might even try sticking to one brand for your daily regimen, as this will help you be consistent.

Often times, a specific line of products is engineered to work together, and will promote healing and prevention in the same way.

Stay away from harsh products that can irritate your skin, and change products if what you are using is not working for you. Consult a physician if use of over-the-counter hygiene products isn't doing the trick.

## CHAPTER 6 – LASER TREATMENTS TO CURE ACNE

There are many different acne treatments, designed to treat different types of acne. Mild forms of acne can often be treated by over-the-counter products and natural remedies, while more severe forms of acne require medical attention.

In recent years laser treatments have proven to be a faster, and sometimes more efficient means for treating many conditions. Acne is one of them.

Acne is rarely misdiagnosed, and is easy to analyze. It can leave lasting scars, which are more prevalent in forms of severe acne, while those left with milder forms of the condition are easier to treat.

One of the most successful treatment alternatives for treating acne scars is the use of lasers such as Erbium. Acne should be treated as early on in the course of the condition as possible, so as to prevent further scarring. This can also reduce the severity of the scarring.

One of the newest ways to treat active acne is with micro dermabrasion using aluminum hydroxide crystals. These crystals affect the skin, removing the top layers. This serves to remove excess debris associated with acne. This type of treatment is not necessary or recommended with milder forms of acne as it can be hard on the skin. However, this treatment has proven to be very effective in clearing up active acne.

This type of treatment is also used to clear acne on the back and chest. This can be helpful since back and chest acne is often more difficult to treat than facial acne.

Treating acne scarring requires a series of treatments before visible results are seen. Unfortunately, this treatment isn't very effective in treating deep scarring caused by severe or prolonged acne.

The downfall of micro dermabrasion treatment is that it is operator dependent. Over peeling the skin can lead to such side effects as hypopigmentation or scarring. So, in effect, if not done properly, the treatment you are using to clear up acne scarring could actually cause additional scarring.

Because of this, it is recommended it be done by a physician or qualified therapist who knows how to make it be effective without causing more damage to your skin.

Erbium laser treatment as a means of treating acne and the scars associated with it is painless, bloodless, gentle, and very effective.

The actual therapy is simple, fast, and accurate and more severe scarring can be treated during several sittings if preferred.

Though the side effects of such lasting treatments are few, and may not occur, but they are still possible. Discuss this treatment and its possible side effects with your doctor before deciding whether or not it will be the best treatment for you. Remember, there may be other options available that might be more highly recommended.

## CHAPTER 7 – CYSTIC ACNE – CAUSES AND TREATMENT

Cystic acne is one of the most severe forms of acne. Nodules form under the skin, and then later harden into painful cysts. This type of acne requires medical attention, and usually persists for long period of times, often weeks or even months.

Cystic acne is often treated with a drug called Accutane, an oral medication usually taken once or twice a day for 16 to 20 weeks. It is believed to marginally reduce the size of the oil glands so that less oil is produced. This reduces the chance for pores to clog because the body is not producing as much oil. When this occurs, the formation of pimples and cysts is reduced; the pre-existing ones are not further irritated.

This medication also helps to reduce cell shedding and the stickiness in the follicles, which helps prevent the development of this painful type of acne.

Advantages of this drug are: it is a very effective medication that can help prevent extensive scarring in many patients. After one to 20 weeks of use, acne is reduced, or in some cases, almost completely goes away. The downside to this is that when the patient stops taking this medication, the acne often returns and it is necessary to once again begin taking it.

There are, however, several disadvantages to taking Accutane, and they should be considered before making the decision to take this drug. In addition to being very expensive, this drug is linked to some very adverse effects.

Possible side effects include: inflammation of the lip, inflammation of the mucous membrane on the eyes, dry mouth, nose, or skin, itching, and muscle aches.

More serious side effects include decreased levels of blood cholesterol, lipid, and triglyceride levels, and abnormal liver enzymes. Patients taking Accutane are usually monitored by a physician to make sure these side effects don't occur, and to stop the drug if they do.

The good news is that these side effects usually go away after the medications stopped, but if you are using this drug and experience any of these side effects, it is crucial that you tell your doctor immediately.

The most serious adverse effect of this drug is that it can cause serious birth defects. Women who are taking this drug are advised to take a pregnancy test each month to be sure the drug is stopped should they become pregnant.

There are other rules that women should follow pertaining to this drug therapy and having children, so it is important to consult your physician about this drug and its possible effects.

Cystic acne is one of the most painful types, and, perhaps, most difficult to cure. Find a treatment that works for you, and consult your physician about its effects.

## CHAPTER 8 – ACNE MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Acne is a common problem among teens, and doesn't always clear up by adulthood. There are considerable problems that can occur with both teen and adult acne, and treatments to counteract both.

Recognizing what is causing the acne is an essential part of curing it, but recognizing what doesn't cause acne can be just as important. Through the years, many myths have passed down about what causes acne, and they have caused ill-formed perceptions.

This article covers some of those myths and perceptions, and will dispel the misconceptions associated with those myths.

It is a myth that getting a tan can help clear up acne. Even though a tan may help cover the redness caused by acne, it won't actually heal or prevent it. Add to that the risks associated with tanning beds and the sun, and the skin damage that can occur, and this may hurt more than it will help.

It is also believed that eating greasy, fried foods, or consuming chocolate can cause acne. Numerous scientific studies have concluded there is no connection between acne and one's diet.

It is also a myth that the more you wash your face, the fewer breakouts you will experience. While washing your face gets rid of oil and excess dirt, and removes dry skin, washing your face too often can remove some of the essential oils, therefore, causing your face to become especially dry and irritated. While this won't directly cause acne, it will continue to irritate, which will keep it from healing. By not over washing your face, you are allowing the body's natural oils to work, at the same time removing dirt and dead skin which can clog pores and cause acne.

Another common acne myth is that popping pimples will help them clear up more quickly. While this can make the pimple seem less noticeable, it can actually make the healing process a longer one. This is because popping a pimple can push the bacteria from it deeper into the skin, making the surrounding area red and irritated. Devices designed to help pop your pimples, such as blackhead extractors, aren't safe either, as they can cause scars to form.

Another myth is you can't wear makeup or shave if you want to have clear skin. If you have acne, it is okay to use products that are noncomedogenic or nonacnegenic, which means they won't clog pores and cause breakouts. Some concealers now have benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid in them, and, will, therefore, help fight acne.

There are many other myths associated with acne and what causes it. It is important to understand what really is causing your acne before you will be able to treat it. Consult a dermatologist if you are unsure about possible causes and treatments, or if you feel your acne may require medical attention.

# Bonus Chapter

## Top 10 Resources On Beating The Acne Problem

1. [SuperFastAcneCure.com](http://SuperFastAcneCure.com) – Now comes with a **free** report on “The Five Basic Secrets To Clearing Your Skin”. Highly recommended.
2. [Jamie Lockwood's Acne Journals](#) – Blog on how an adult acne sufferer finally beats his decade old acne problem.
3. [How To Get Rid Of Acne](#) – Superb article on WikiHow.
4. [Wikipedia Article On Acne Vulgaris](#) – Contains information on causes of acne and how to treat them.
5. [Acne Q&A](#) – From the National Institute of Health.
6. [AcneNet](#) – From the AAD.
7. [More Than Just Skin Deep](#) – A comprehensive paper discussing about the psychological effect of acnes.
8. [Acne.Org](#) – Home of Dan Kern's regimen.
9. [Acne Information For Kids](#)
10. [Acne overview from Mayo Clinic](#). Highly recommended. Very comprehensive.