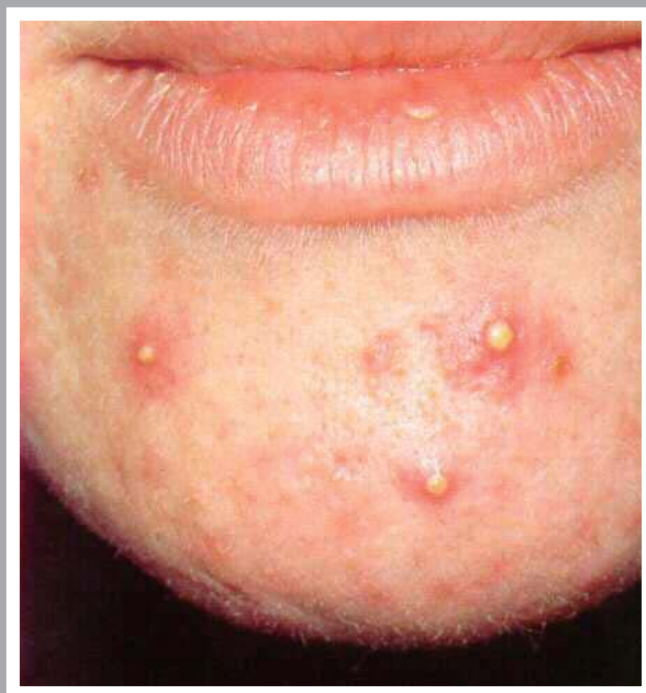


# Student Health Centre

What is Acne?



## What causes Acne?

Acne is an inflammatory skin disease which affects the tiny pores which cover the face, arms, back and chest and the oil glands attached to them. It is an abnormal response in the skin to normal levels of the male hormone – testosterone. Both men and women have testosterone circulating in the blood, but in the acne sufferer, this hormone has a profound effect on the skin.

### In the skin, the disease attacks two structures:-



1. The pore through which the hairs emerge from the skin – here dead skin cells become 'sticky' and partially block the pore. This restricts the flow of oil onto the skin surface, resulting in solidification of the oil, which fills the hair channel, forming a blackhead.
2. If the pore becomes completely blocked, then oil builds up around the hair and the hair root and becomes infected with bacteria, which are normally present in the skin. These bacteria break down the oil to very inflammatory chemicals, which cause redness, pus formation and pain – the "zit".

### How should I wash my skin?



Acne is not caused by dirt or poor cleanliness. The black of blackheads is due to the colouring of the plug of 'sticky' cells blocking the hair duct. In fact, some people with acne tend to overwash, this can actually make acne worse by drying the skin and making it sore. Normal regular washing with mild soap twice daily is all that is necessary. If you have a combination skin, use non-greasy moisturisers on dry areas.

#### To squeeze or not to squeeze?

It may be very difficult to avoid squeezing or picking at your spots. If you do squeeze blackheads or pustules, you may force the contents deep into the skin rather than onto the surface. If this happens you may be left with much worse scarring or cyst formation. For blackheads, you may find a blackhead remover (comedone spoon – available from most chemists and The Body Shop) will help, causing less trauma to the skin.

### If squeezing, follow a few simple rules: -

Never squeeze a spot unless you can see the yellow pus. Wash your hands before puncturing the surface of the pustule with a sterilised needle and gently squeeze out the pus. Avoid squeezing until you can see blood, as this is more likely to cause a scar.

#### Does diet affect a cne?

The simplest answer is no. The myth persists that chocolate and fatty foods make acne worse. In a very small percentage of people, these foods do make their acne worse, but in most people, diet is not important. A good balanced diet is, however, important for general well being.

#### What should I do about my acne?

Acne is a very treatable disease, but in many patients treatment needs to be started early and be aggressive to prevent the scarring. Acne info. Feb'99

If your acne fails to respond quickly to products brought at the chemist, consult your doctor. He/ she can advise you about the different treatment options and can prescribe most of these. In severe cases, your doctor can refer you to a dermatologist for further treatment.

**For more information contact: - The Student Health Centre.**