

Acne

Almost everyone is affected by acne at some stage in their life. It commonly occurs during adolescent years, but it can affect people in their 20s, 30s and 40s. Acne is caused when the oil glands (sebaceous glands) of the skin become blocked and inflamed.

Causes of acne

It is primarily a disease of the skin but several factors may influence it in different people:

- Fluctuating hormone levels that normally occur in adolescence can aggravate acne.
- Similar fluctuations may be responsible for acne that occurs in some females during their menstrual cycle.
- Cosmetics and sunscreens can make acne worse by blocking the glands.
- Perspiration due to exercise or hot weather can cause the glands to produce extra oil and become more likely to block, causing acne.
- Excessive cleansing can also cause the glands to produce excessive amounts of oil and worsen acne. Cleansing is only necessary once or twice a day.

Several myths should be dispelled

- Acne is not due to infection or allergy. There is little evidence to blame chocolate, dairy products or any other

food for causing acne.

- Because acne is a medical condition, it cannot be cured by beauty therapies, cosmetics or cleansers.

Treatment for acne

Fortunately, numerous effective treatments for acne are available from your GP:

- Milder forms respond to creams and lotions available over the counter from your pharmacist (e.g. benzoyl peroxide);
- Moderate forms can respond to creams available on prescription from your GP.
- More severe forms can be treated with specific antibiotics or other treatments available on prescription from your GP.

Please see your GP if you have any concerns.

Adapted with permission of the Central West Division of General Practice.