

# ADOLESCENT ACNE

Acne, this is a disorder of skin glands that produce a natural oil (Sebum). The face, neck, shoulders, upper chest and back are most frequently affected. It affects more than one in two young adults at sometime, usually beginning at puberty and clearing completely before the mid-twenties. However in many adolescents, acne clears within a year or two. The characteristic white-heads and black-heads are caused by over-production of sebum, leading to a blockage of skin pores with a mixture of dead skin cells and oil. Bacteria on the skin surface intensify the problem by producing chemicals that inflame and irritate the skin. Diet has little influence on acne. In spite of what is commonly believed, sugary foods and fatty foods, such as chocolate and chips, have not been proven to contribute to acne.

## PRODUCTS AND BENEFITS

Most cases of mild acne will be helped simply by observing good skin cleansing. Sufferers should wash the affected areas twice daily, to avoid food stuffs that they themselves feel worsen the problem, and spend more time in the sun during summer. Girls should be careful to avoid greasy cosmetic products.

Numerous products are available for the treatment of acne over the counter at the pharmacy.

The active ingredients involved in OTC products are generally either:

1. ABRASIVE/KERATOLYTIC -unblocking skin pores and speeding-up the production of new skin cells e.g. Products like PANOXYL<sup>®</sup>, QUINODERM<sup>®</sup> which contain benzoyl peroxide,
2. CLEANSING -washing away excess sebum e.g. CLEARASIL<sup>®</sup>
3. ANTIBACTERIAL -reducing the number of bacteria present on the skin surface e.g. QUINIDERM<sup>®</sup> FACEWASH.

Many products contain a combination of two or more of these types of agents. Benzoyl Peroxide-containing products are regarded as the best OTC treatments available from pharmacies. They will cause dryness, redness, and peeling, and should be used cautiously at first, perhaps just once a day. If usage is uncomfortable for these reasons, then patients should stop use for a few days.

In Whelehans Pharmacy, I regularly recommend ROC<sup>®</sup> Purif-AC as a skin cleanser in Acne. It works in two ways

1. It reduces the sebaceous secretions to limit bacterial proliferation and normalizes your skin gradually.

2. It removes delicately the dead cells and impurities and unclogs the pores.

It is an excellent product for reducing redness and blemishes, which is often a source of embarrassment for teenagers. I have seen great results after recommending this product to for a number of years. As with all skincare products, a patch test should be performed before using to ensure you are not allergic to the product. This involves applying a small sample of the product to your skin (usually arm) and leaving for 24 hours to ensure no skin reaction.

Consider going to a GP if:

- The acne is severe, angry-looking, inflamed or widespread. Medical treatment may be necessary.
- The condition shows no improvement despite the (correct) use of one or more treatment products.
- Any suspect case of medication-induced acne.

There are prescription medicines available from your doctor for severe acne including antibiotics and retinoids. More information on these options are available in Whelehans.

## **PRACTICAL POINTS**

You cannot expect instant results with whatever products you try. Acne is very slow to respond to treatment.

**Disclaimer:** Please ensure you consult with your healthcare professional before making any changes recommended

**For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans, log on to [www.whelehans.ie](http://www.whelehans.ie) or dial 04493 34591.**