



Dispelling the Myths about Acne: A Fact Sheet for Patients

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Myth: Acne is caused by dirt that fills the pores causing breakouts.

Fact: The dirty secret is that dirt is not the culprit. The four steps in acne production are: oil secretion, plugging of the pore, bacteria living in the pore breaking down oil, and inflammation.

Myth: If you are patient, you'll grow out of your acne.

Fact: Acne is not curable, but it is treatable. You gain nothing by delaying treatment, however. By seeking treatment early, you reduce the risk of prolonged or permanent pigment changes and scarring.

Myth: You can clear acne by treating pimples individually.

Fact: Spot-treating doesn't work. It is important to treat the whole face or affected region every day, even when your skin is clear. Take preventive measures against acne lesions; don't chase them around your face.

Myth: A bad diet can cause acne; a good diet can prevent it.

Fact: Hormones and heredity are the main factors in acne, not diet. Whether you eat healthy foods or not, rest assured that your diet is unlikely to affect your acne. It takes two to three weeks for a blemish to form, so what you ate yesterday will not appear on your face today. If you are one of the rare individuals to identify a food that does cause your acne to flare, abstain from eating that particular food for a while.

Myth: Make-up causes acne.

Fact: Not likely. Most products are non-comedogenic. To be on the safe side, try to use water-based foundations. Some make-up products even camouflage acne, which may be preferable in the short-term before clearance. Engaging in heavy exercise while wearing a greasy make-up can contribute to acne by clogging the pores with a mixture of sweat and product ingredients, so avoid this combination.

Myth: Exercise improves acne. Sweating cleans out the pores.

Fact: Exercise can actually cause flares on the chest and back by stimulating oil production, which combines with perspiration, heat, and friction to cause flares on the chest and back. Don't stop exercising, but if you have acne on the chest or back, consider this fact when developing your exercise regimen.

Myth: Stress causes acne.

Fact: It doesn't cause it, but it certainly can make it worse. Stress can aggravate hormones, possibly increasing the cortisol level in the blood, which may affect the comedogenic process by increasing oil production. This may be a more significant risk factor for oil-

prone individuals. Sleep deprivation can have the same effect on cortisol, so it also may contribute to acne development.

Myth: Sunscreens cause acne. Sun exposure improves acne and fades scars.

Fact: The nominal, fleeting improvement in acne from small amounts of sun exposure is not worth the greater risks of developing skin cancers. Minimal amounts of sun exposure may initially lead to some acne improvement, but prolonged exposure promotes more rapid exfoliation, which clogs pores and leads to more breakouts. Frequent application of sunscreen with a high SPF helps protect the skin. It is unlikely as a contributing factor to the development of acne, other than very small papules and comedones. Some agents are heavy and greasy, but oil-free varieties less likely to contribute to breakouts are available. Choose an oil-free sunscreen with a high SPF and strive to avoid sun exposure as much as possible. Remember, the Bronze Age is over – prolonged sun exposure does not improve acne, it promotes the opposite effect.

Myth: The use of lasers can remove acne scars.

Fact: Most “acne scars” are actually hyperpigmentation. Time and sun-avoidance will help heal these lesions. Lasers can improve some scars, but will not remove all traces of ice-pick scars. It’s best to avoid scars to begin with since we cannot correct every defect or blemish, even with lasers. Don’t rely on a laser to save you from scarring. Each scar is unique. Some may largely disappear, some will not.

Myth: You can treat acne by removing oil, thus drying out the skin.

Fact: This causes irritation and makes the skin look and feel worse. Also, the body responds to this action by producing more oil.

Myth: Acne is curable

Fact: Not yet. It is treatable though with treatments ideally tailored to the individual. By seeing your dermatologist you’ve taken the first important step toward managing your acne.

For Questions or Emergency Care:

Call the office at **601-815-3374**. You may need to speak with the doctor on-call.