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Acne: What Causes It And Treatments That Work

A Bacterial Breeding Ground – The Development of Acne

Many people think they know what causes acne, the inflammation of skin pores that results in problems such as blackheads, whiteheads or pimples, primarily in teenagers. There are a lot of misconceptions about acne though. Officially, common acne is known as acne vulgaris. And in explaining it, the answer becomes bit complicated.

Acne is an inflamed disease of the skin, and it has many causes, one of which is bacteria in the pores of the skin. The body in many ways becomes allergic to this type of bacteria. This attracts white blood cells to fight the allergy, and the pores become blocked. Oil secretions will build up and provide a breeding ground for even more bacteria. Then pimples will form. These red bumps resemble small boils, which fill with a nasty pus caused by the body fighting the infection of the bacteria.

There is probably no perfect cure for acne other than outgrowing it but there are a number of things that can be done to lessen the physical effects. First, remember that for many years, people thought that acne was caused by poor hygiene and by eating certain foods. Fried foods and chocolate were especially blamed for acne, probably because teenagers eat fried foods and chocolate commonly, but that may have been blaming the messenger for the message.

There is no scientific evidence linking diet to acne. Also, while personal hygiene is important and a good thing, over washing can damage skin and actually make acne worse. But good hygiene and a good diet can't hurt, and they might just help a little. Also using makeup that doesn't clog pores but can at least assist the body in not making acne worse.

Treatments that kill the bacteria that cause acne included the use of antibiotics like tetracycline, doxycycline and minocycline, which are taken orally. Also topical antibiotics or bactericides like Benzoyl peroxide or erythromycin can help. The bacteria also known as "P. acnes", does however become resistant to the antibiotics eventually. However Benzoyl peroxide, an oxidizer, does not seem to generate resistance by the bacteria. While the acne will come back, it is a short term and temporary cure and is applied topically.

Exfoliating the skin can also help. This method can be done by using a cloth or a liquid scrub, or by using certain chemicals. Chemical exfoliating substances include salicylic acid and glycolic acid. Both of these agents cause a peeling of the top layer of skin, which prevents a build up of dead skin which blocks pores when combined with oil. This in turn, makes a breeding ground for bacteria.

Another over the counter remedy is salicylic acid, which softens skin and gets rid of dead skin cells, which in turn unclogs pores. Many face wash products contain this ingredient. Also sulfur contained in many over the counter products works well for many people. Another product is glycolic acid, which is found in anti-aging products as well as acne medicines.

There are also a number of natural remedies that can fight acne and the bacteria that causes it. Tea tree oil is gaining in popularity. It kills the bacteria and also reduces redness and inflammation. It works much the same as Benzoyl peroxide but causes less skin irritation and is carried at health food stores.

Acupuncture is used by some and is thought to alleviate hormonal imbalances in the body. Those who use acupuncture also usually suggest lifestyle changes and a change in diet, including cutting back on dairy products.

Light therapy is another natural remedy to fight the bacteria that has many adherents. Many people believe that the bacteria that causes acne is insensitive to light in the blue wavelength of the light spectrum. Light therapy means shining blue light onto a patient for fifteen minutes at a time twice a week, usually for four weeks. This treatment can be expensive, running about \$150 per treatment. Not all patients have had good results, but some have. Also since light in this wavelength is not harmful to the skin, there are no side effects or after effects.

Fighting the bacteria that causes acne is of major concern for many medical professionals, and surely with time they will find more and better ways to do so. In the meantime, the treatments listed here can help many people.

Acne Cysts and Treatments Defined

Deep cysts, inflammation, extensive damage to the skin and scarring characterize severe acne. It often requires an aggressive treatment regimen and should be treated by a dermatologist. Severe forms of acne can require years of treatment and may experience one or more treatment failures. However, almost every case of acne can be successfully treated.

There are five popular treatments for acne cysts. There are many effective treatments that are available currently. Drainage and surgical excision, inner lesion corticosteroid injection, isotretinoin (a potent drug for treating severe cystic acne), oral antibiotics, and oral contraceptives are the most popular treatments. Some people may choose a more natural treatment for severe acne, which will also be covered briefly in this article.

Drainage and extraction, or acne surgery as it is also called, should not be performed by patients and is used on some large cysts that do not respond to medication and require drainage and extraction. Dermatologists are trained in the proper technique and perform acne surgery under sterile conditions. Patient attempts to drain and extract acne cysts, by squeezing or picking, can lead to infection, worsening of the acne and scarring.

When an acne cyst becomes severely inflamed, there is a good chance it will rupture and scarring will occur. To treat these severely inflamed cysts and prevent scarring, dermatologists may inject such cysts with a diluted corticosteroid. This lessens the inflammation and promotes healing of the acne cyst. An inner lesion corticosteroid injection works by melting the cyst over the course of a few days.

Isotretinoin is the most effective treatment known today for severe acne and acne that is resistant to other medications and treatments. Isotretinoin is a form of vitamin A, a synthetic creation, which comes in a pill form. It is administered once or twice a day for anywhere from sixteen to twenty weeks total. There are many possible side effects that may occur while undergoing this therapy.

Possible side effects include severe pain in the chest or abdomen, trouble swallowing or painful swallowing, severe headache, blurred vision or dizziness, bone and joint pain, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea or rectal bleeding, depression, dryness of the skin, eyes and nose, and thinning hair. While taking isotretinoin patients are monitored closely by their healthcare provider through follow up appointments.

Oral antibiotics have been a basis of therapy for severe acne for many years. Like topical antibiotics, oral antibiotics work to reduce the "P. acnes". "P. Acnes" are normal residents on the skin, which decreases inflammation. Treatment with oral antibiotics usually begins with a high dosage, which is eventually reduced as the acne resolves. Over time, the "P. acnes" bacteria can become resistant to the treatment. When resistance occurs, another antibiotic can be prescribed or other treatment options may need to be explored.

Oral contraceptives have been shown to effectively clear acne in women by suppressing the overactive sebaceous glands. Oral contraceptives can be used as long-term acne therapy; however, this medication should not be prescribed to women who smoke, have a blood clotting disorder, are older than thirty-five or have a history of migraine headaches, without the advice of a gynecologist.

Spirolactone, a synthetic steroid, may be used in combination with oral contraceptives to treat acne in adult females. Spirolactone inhibits androgen, hormones that stimulate oil glands in addition to other effects on the body, production. There are possible side effects that may accompany Spirolactone treatment. A few side effects include irregular menstruation, breast tenderness, headache and fatigue.

Some people choose more natural ways to combat cystic acne. Some natural treatments are eating a whole foods diet that consists of only natural foods that have not been chemically or mechanically processed. Yoga or deep relaxation techniques may be used to reduce the amount of stress that is put on the body and the mind. Essential oils are another natural treatment that may be added to the diet of sufferers of severe acne. These are just a few of the natural methods of treatment for cystic acne. No matter what method of treatment you decide to try you should always consult a professional, whether it is your dermatologist or an herbalist. Your doctor should be able to refer you to a board certified dermatologist if needed.

Acne is Not Just a Teenage Problem

Twenty-five percent of all adult men and fifty percent of all adult women suffer from some form of acne. These are the facts but how many adults have never had at least one acne flare up in their adult life? Adults can develop acne well into adulthood- twenties, thirties and forties and beyond that even. No acne is pleasant but somehow adult acne seems worse as acne is

typically thought of as an adolescence problem.

In reality adult acne, or any acne for that matter, is very hard to deal with and can lead to depression, a negative self-image and social anxiety may occur as well. The causes of adult acne are different for all people and the treatments vary as much as the causes do. Most adult acne can be treated and managed effectively.

The causes of adult acne are unknown; some people think that adult acne has hormonal roots. The appropriate adult pimple treatment may involve balancing your hormones, which typically requires a trip to your healthcare provider or dermatologist for some testing to conclude that hormones are indeed the problem. The development of a pimple is very detailed and very intricate. While it is known that pores that are clogged can block oil from escaping, it is not known why it happens in one pore and not another.

It is also not known why this does not happen in all of the pores. The many causes of adult acne and teen acne include hormone imbalance, diet, genetics, vitamin deficiency, stress, and more. The real explanation may be a complex mix of many of these factors. Since it is not known what causes pimples, it is important to focus on the proper treatment of acne.

Acne is often considered a hormonal disease or condition, meaning hormones are responsible for the maturing of the oil producing glands in our skin. Did you ever wonder why you never see acne on a young child? Young children do not have the hormones needed to mature the skin's oils. Once a person becomes an adult there are many things that can throw our hormones out of balance and in turn wreak havoc on our skin, among other things.

Some things that cause such imbalances are puberty, pregnancy, menopause and many other things that cause hormones to flare up. Acne may be precipitated by androgens, the male hormones found in men and women. Oil surpluses made by these hormones are the biggest cause of clogged pores and hair follicles, which results in bacteria growth and acne pimples and blemishes. Acne that is caused by hormones is typically more prevalent in women during natural cycles like menstruation, pregnancy and menopause.

Treatment for adult acne is very effective and there are many forms of treatment available. The best treatment happens to be the same treatment recommended most for teenage acne. Benzoyl peroxide kills acne much better than any other acne medication out there on the market today, including all prescription medications. For this product to be effective an acne sufferer must use enough of the product and use it according to the given instructions. If used correctly and in a large enough amount the acne will start to clear up.

This method of treatment is also very simple and is not invasive in any way. Benzoyl peroxide does not have a negative effect on the skin first unlike other prescription acne treatments, meaning you will not see a worsening of the skin before you see the improvement. Skin does not build up a tolerance to this treatment so it will be effective for long-term use. If it works on acne the first time, it will always work.

There may be a genetic component involved meaning acne can run in families. Up to fifty percent of women whose acne continues beyond their teens show evidence of increased androgen levels, with raised testosterone and/or lowered sex hormone binding globulin, a

protein found in the blood. Correction of these abnormal hormonal imbalances often improves symptoms, so you need to see to it that your doctor is prepared to measure these hormone levels and help you seek a treatment. Several different treatments are available over the counter to help mild to moderate symptoms and your pharmacist can advise on which product would suit you best.

It is important to realize that adult acne is more common than most think and adult sufferers are not alone, there is a large population of adult acne sufferers. If you are troubled by adult onset acne, first consult your doctor. He or she may have a hormonal adult acne treatment that can help. If you have adult acne and it is severe or causes you pain do not hesitate to talk to your healthcare provider and discuss possible medical treatment of your acne.

Hateful Hormones and Other Factors That Cause Acne

Acne can often be considered the bane of the teenager's existence. Where in the world does it come from and how do you get rid of those pesky zits? They cause embarrassment and inconvenience, and while everyone has suffered from them to some extent, no one likes them. Major culprits in causing acne can be simple hormones. Specifically, the male hormone testosterone can cause acne.

During puberty the teenagers' body is changing. During this time, most teenagers produce abnormal levels of the male hormone testosterone, which is a major contributor. Most people outgrow this condition by their early twenties, but with some people it lasts much longer, to their third or fourth decade of life. Most people, at some time or another in their lives, have to deal with acne.

Women also produce additional hormones during the menstrual cycle, and for many women this can lead to more problems with acne. If this occurs, visiting with a doctor or other medical professional can provide a cure or remedy. There is also a medical theory that stress contributes to acne because it causes an increased output of hormones from the adrenal glands. Additionally, hyperactive sebaceous glands are secondary to other hormone sources, menstrual cycle, stress and testosterone.

Some people's bodies also over produce something called sebum, which is a contributing factor to acne. While this is not the only cause, it certainly contributes. Add to this the accumulation of bacteria in the pores of the skin, dead skin cells accumulation, and irritation caused by scratching or rubbing. Acne can also be caused, or made much worse by the use of anabolic steroids, used by some athletes but generally frowned upon in athletic competition and in many cases illegal.

Also some medications contain halogens, including iodides, chlorides, and bromides. These medications can contribute to acne, as can lithium, barbiturates and androgens. Chlorine exposure can also cause a type of acne known as chloracne, which is especially severe and can be long lasting.

With the knowledge that hormones play a major role in causing acne, many of the misconceptions about acne can be addressed and discounted. One of these is diet. For many years people thought that fried foods and chocolate caused acne. There are a couple of reasons for this. People associated fried foods with oily skin, and assumed that consuming oil or grease had to make the skin greasy and more prone to acne. This is not the case.

Also, teenagers are food-consuming machines. In fact, many dieticians have said that the fact that teenagers consume so much food is the main reason their diets usually include nutritious foods – the fact that they eat everything. However, pizza, hamburgers, French fries, chocolate shakes, candy bars, and other foods that are often favorites of teenagers, have been erroneously blamed for acne for years. While eating good, nutritious foods and making sure that you include vegetables, fruits, lean meats and whole grains in your diet will certainly improve your health, and therefore might improve acne, there is no direct link of diet and acne. French fries are not to blame, and neither are pizza or candy bars. There is just no real connection.

Also, bad personal hygiene has been blamed for acne and caused many teenagers embarrassment. No matter how clean they kept their faces they still had zits. In addition, excessive cleaning can actually make acne worse. If the skin is damaged by rough washing, or becomes dried out, then chances are acne will be worse. Also many over the counter products sold to make acne better can actually clog pores and make acne worse as well.

There are many good treatments available for acne. Of course, seeing your doctor is best. Many good prescription drugs are available. Many of these drugs can control the output of testosterone, and some can help women with menstrual cycle difficulties. If that is not an option, visit a pharmacy and consult with the pharmacist on over the counter remedies that are beneficial. Also moderate washing, good nutrition, protection of the skin when out in the sun, and time seem to be the best cures. With time everyone recovers from acne, the bane of the teenager's existence.

How Acne Affects a Teenager's Psyche

Many people who have never suffered from acne have no idea how large acne can loom in a person's life. The psychological and social impact of acne in a teenager's life cannot be understated. Adolescence is a difficult time because it represents a passage between childhood into adulthood. When a teenager suffers from acne, the emotional travails of adolescence can increase exponentially. Teenagers tend to be much more sensitive to their appearance and the judgments of their peers.

In adolescence, physical appearance and conformity tend to be highly valued, so those teenagers who suffer from acne may feel socially devalued and ostracized from their peers. Even mild acne, research shows, can have an emotionally and psychologically debilitating effect. Higher rates of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem have all been linked with the presence of acne.

Because adolescence is a period of heightened sensitivity, even mild acne can cause significant emotional stress to a teenager. Most teenagers with acne tend to develop a negative self-image. This may lead to a withdrawal from friends and family. Teenagers may feel stigmatized by the label of 'bad skin,' and may avoid social situations. Even the most outgoing individuals may find it difficult to interact comfortably with their peers. The burden of acne may also lead to poor academic performance, lack of participation, poor school attendance, or inappropriate behavior.

It is not uncommon that teenagers with mild acne experience what psychologists have termed 'dysmorphophobic' acne. This refers to cases where the individual perceives that their acne is much worse than it really is. They may express feelings of disgust and repulsion at their acne. Since most teenagers are hypersensitive to their appearance, even the mildest manifestation of acne may upset some teenagers greatly. In these cases, it is recommended that the individual visit a skin specialist, such as a dermatologist.

A dermatologist will be able to explain the specific processes of the skin, and prescribe the appropriate medication. A visit to the dermatologist will help put things in perspective. With a bit of professional advice, a person with dysmorphophobic acne can realize that their acne could be much worse, and that mild cases of acne are highly treatable.

What are some other problems that adolescents with acne may face? Teenagers with acne may suffer from low self-esteem and a negative or even distorted body image. Many acne sufferers may feel socially debilitated because of their acne. They may have a difficult time socializing normally, and have trouble making eye contact, especially when meeting or speaking to strangers.

Adolescent acne sufferers may rely on certain 'crutches' to help deal with the embarrassing aspects of their appearance. Acne sufferers may use glasses to attempt to detract from or hide their acne. They may grow their hair long, or style their hair so as to hide parts of their face. Many young women may rely on heavy foundations, concealer, and other types of make-up to hide their acne problem. Even though it may further exacerbate their acne, teenage girls may feel like they have to wear make-up.

Teenage boys, in turn, face their own set of challenges. Young men may feel at a disadvantage to their female counterparts because they have no means by which to conceal their acne. Teenage boys may feel like they cannot participate in certain sports or physical activities that require them to disrobe in locker rooms or remove some portion of clothing, such as swimming. Teenage boys may feel socially insecure and even emasculated because of their acne.

Teenagers who suffer from acne may find it especially difficult to form personal relationships. Most adolescents experience periods of insecurity in developing relationships with members of the opposite sex. These insecurities compounded with the stigma of 'bad skin' can hamper any efforts to build personal or romantic relationships. Adolescents with acne may feel so stigmatized that they may avoid typical teenage activities, such as extracurricular activities, school dances, proms, dating, and other activities.

Teenagers with acne may also suffer from the taunts and bullying of their peers. The fear of being criticized or judged may cause some adolescents to become socially reclusive. Moreover,

anyone who is taunted or bullied is more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and even suicide.

Scalp Folliculitis – Just a Fancy Name for Scalp Acne

Scalp folliculitis is a condition in which the hair follicles become clogged and result in inflammation. Scalp folliculitis is a relatively common condition that is referred to by a variety of names, including scalp acne, Tinea Barbae, Barber's Itch, and others. Who gets scalp folliculitis? Scalp folliculitis can affect just about anyone. Both men and women appear to be equally prone to this condition, and it affects people of all ages. Despite its name, scalp folliculitis can actually occur on any part of your body where hair follicles are present. This includes your face, arms, armpits, and legs.

What does scalp folliculitis look like? Most people are not aware of the appearance of scalp folliculitis, since it most commonly appears on the scalp. Scalp folliculitis manifests itself as small pustules that are white-yellowish in color. This condition usually looks ringed by narrow red circle-like blisters. Even though scalp folliculitis typically clogs the hair follicle, hair can still grow through pustules.

Many times, hair also grows right next to the area where the pustule resides on the hair follicle. When picked at, pustules may ooze sebum or bloodstained pus. In rare cases, scalp folliculitis may develop into boils or other skin infections. In even more rare cases, bacteria may enter through the infected hair follicle and travel into the blood stream, thereby invading the body.

How do you know if you have scalp folliculitis? If you find the area surrounding your hairline to be consistently itchy, this may be a sign of scalp folliculitis. Even if you only sense a small amount of lesions, this may still be a sign of folliculitis. Scalp folliculitis often infects only a small portion of the scalp, or in more severe cases, it may spread to many areas of the scalp. Many people who suffer from scalp folliculitis may find that the infected areas are itchy and hard to keep from touching. Once the infected areas have been scratched at or continually touched, they quickly become hard or crusted. This, in turn, may cause you to want to scratch at them even more!

So what causes scalp folliculitis? It appears that scalp folliculitis begins in much the same way that acne is formed. Like acne, scalp folliculitis involves bacteria (and sometimes fungi) that become trapped in a pore. In the case of scalp folliculitis, the bacteria propionibacterium acnes (P. acnes) are the main culprits. Another main contributor is the Staphylococcus bacterium, which is responsible for a variety of eye and nose infections, as well. Other contributing factors are yeasts and mites. When bacteria invade a hair follicle and mixes with sebum, scalp folliculitis results.

Many times, people develop scalp folliculitis when they enter a hot tub or other warm moist location that is not well chlorinated. The temperature causes the scalp to moisten and allows hair follicles to become more susceptible to infection. Another potential cause of scalp folliculitis is the presence of ingrown hairs. An ingrown hair can easily become a hotbed of bacterial activity. Other contributing factors to the development of scalp folliculitis include

diabetes, excessive sweating, tight clothing, unsanitary conditions, exposure to heat and humidity, and other skin conditions like dermatitis and eczema.

The flu and lingering colds may also contribute to infection. Scalp folliculitis is contagious, and may be easily passed from one person to another. It is recommended that infected persons always use clean dry towels and avoid from sharing towels, combs, brushes, or other hair accessories.

If you have a persistent case of scalp folliculitis that bothers you, visit your doctor. Your doctor will take your medical history and try to determine if the infection is related to a bacteria or fungus. Once this has been determined, an appropriate treatment plan will be created. Most of the time, treatment consists of treating the infection with an over the counter topical cream that is applied to the affected area daily.

The cream your doctor recommends will most likely be an antibiotic. If the cream does not do the job, your doctor may also prescribe a broad-spectrum oral antibiotic. Many common topical antibiotics that are used to treat scalp folliculitis include Bacitracin, Neomycin, and Mycitracin. These are usually applied to the infected areas three to four times a day.

When Medications Cause Aggravation or Creation of Acne

There are several medications that can trigger a breakout of acne, or aggravate an existing case of acne. Many of these medications and classes of medication are mentioned below and are very helpful in treating acne outbreaks.

In general, any unusual stress or illness may aggravate acne or even cause an acne breakout. In some cases it may be difficult to determine what is causing or aggravating the acne: the illness, the medication you are taking for the illness or your physical or mental stress over the illness.

Caution: If you are taking a prescription medication for a medical condition and the medicine your doctor prescribes causes acne or makes your acne worse, don't stop taking the medicine. Consult your doctor to see if he or she can recommend a different medication that will work for your condition and not perpetuate the acne problem. If he can, then the acne should clear. If, however, you need that particular medicine and only that medicine to control a medical condition, common sense dictates that you should continue the medication and, if possible, control the acne. The other option is learn to live with it and safe ways to cover the blemishes. Acne may be a psychological "pain in the neck" but it isn't dangerous and will not affect your physical health.

Contraceptives: Contraceptives are sometimes prescribed to control acne because these medications affect the body's hormone balance and hormones are a direct link to acne problems. Oral contraceptives contain both estrogen and progestin hormones, the estrogen is fairly stable between brands of contraceptives but there are several different types of progestin and each one will have a different effect.

Oral contraceptives that are most likely to cause or worsen acne are those that have a low estrogen content and a type of progestin that increases the androgen (male hormone) levels in women. The ONLY women who will be affected, however, are those women who have a tendency toward androgenicity. Some of the pills in this category include:

- Loestrin® 1.5/30
- Loestrin® 1/20 Fe
- Estrostep® Fe
- Levlen®
- Alesse®
- Ovral®
- Norlestrin® 1/50

Keep in mind that most women, if they have an acne problem, find that their acne improves when using oral contraceptives. It is the tendency toward androgenicity in some woman that will cause or aggravate acne.

Anticonvulsants: Certain anticonvulsants (such as Dilantin) are prescribed for the treatment of epilepsy and other kinds of seizures as well as for bipolar disorder and some forms of depression. Most anticonvulsants list acne as a common side-effect. Lithium has also been a popular treatment for bipolar disorder and depression. Lithium can also cause acne breakouts.

Corticosteroids: Corticosteroids (like Prednisone) are often used to treat asthma and other chronic lung diseases. Like cortisol, a natural steroid produced by the body during times of intense stress, corticosteroids can stimulate sebum production and lead to acne blemishes.

Sobriety medications: Antabuse (commonly called Disulfuram) is a prescription medicine that is intended to help alcoholics stop drinking. The regular use of Antabuse has been known to cause acne in some of the recovering alcoholics.

Immunosuppressants: Immuran is an immunosuppressant that is used to suppress the immune system in patients awaiting an organ transplant. It can also suppress the patient's natural ability to fight the bacteria that cause acne.

Thyroid preparations: Some thyroid medications (such as Thiourea and Thiouracil) are known to trigger acne. These preparations are used to stimulate the thyroid gland in patients with low thyroid function. Large amounts of iodine, which also helps to regulate thyroid function, can also cause breakouts.

Systemic Steroids: Systemic steroids are synthetic versions of the body's natural steroid, cortisol. Cortisol is normally produced by adrenal glands; systemic steroids are taken to supplement or replace cortisol. Some of these steroids are prednisone, prednisolone, methylprednisolone, betamethasone, dexamethasone, triamcinolone and hydrocortisone. While some systemic steroids are prescribed for some skin conditions but may, in certain patients, also cause a breakout of acne while curing the original skin condition.

Anabolic steroids: Anabolic steroids such as danazol, stanozolol are used (and sometimes abused) by athletes and body-builders to increase muscle bulk. These steroids will cause severe

cases of acne in some of its users.

Cosmetics and Acne: Acne that is caused by cosmetics is called “acne cosmetica.” This type of acne is triggered by cosmetic products rather than through the natural process that creates normal acne. Acne cosmetica is characterized by a rash of small pink bumps on the cheeks, chin and forehead; this condition develops slowly and may or may not be short-lived. If you've recently started using a new skin care product and you're experiencing any of the symptoms listed above, discontinue use of the new product for a few days and see if your breakout subsides.

Why Adult Women Are Prone to Zits

Who wants to go back to the times of high school dances and the thought of how horrible it would be to have a pimple pop up on that special night? No woman, teenage or adult, wants to deal with acne breakouts. Unfortunately a lot of women deal with acne resurfacing in their adult years and it can cause anxiety. Dealing with the problem can be even worse when social events such as job interviews and weddings come along.

What is the reason for these late onsets of acne? Persistent adult acne is a condition that is common for many women who suffered from acne as an adolescent or that had a late development of acne as an adult. No matter what the reason, the emotional and physical stress caused by acne can be detrimental to a woman.

Typically, adolescence is the stage of life that acne is prone to, but acne caused by hormones, usually starts to act up in the early to middle twenties. This is known to continue well into a woman's adult life. Hormonal acne is caused by over-stimulated androgens, oil glands and hair follicles. Acne breakouts occur when oil glands are stimulated excessively.

Most, almost half in fact, of all women experience an increase in facial oiliness and acne flares about a week before menstruation. When constant acne is partnered with excess facial hair and hair loss or thinning hair, it is a sign that androgen production is excessive and can be a red flag to such medical condition such as polycystic ovaries and adrenal hyperplasia. If any of these signals are present a woman should seek medical advice.

Hormonal acne can also cause women to have abnormal menstrual cycles, suffer from obesity, infertility and possibly diabetes. It is very important for women to talk with their doctor about their concerns; a blood test can determine the cause of the symptoms and help determine the best treatment.

Treatment options for hormonal acne are very effective and readily available. Some treatments available are Benzoyl peroxide, a topical antimicrobial, and also some oral antibiotics if the acne is more severe. Isotretinoin is a very popular and effective treatment for women with cystic acne that is accompanied by scarring. Oral contraceptive pills can be used successfully for women with hormonal acne who still develop premenstrual flares. Oral contraceptive pills contain estrogen and progestin that help regulate the menstrual cycle and decrease the androgen activity that contributes to the development of acne.

By reducing the androgen activity it leads to decreased breakouts of acne. If the women are not planning to have children they can take oral contraceptive pills to control acne for extended periods. Spironolactone, an anti-androgen, is another medication that may be prescribed in along with an oral contraceptive to prevent and treat hormonal acne. It blocks androgen receptors and decreases androgen production in the ovaries and the adrenal glands to prevent excessive oil production. The result from this treatment is, of course, fewer acne flares.

Oral contraceptive pills can cause several side effects that can be mild or severe. Mild side effects may include breast tenderness, bloating and nausea. More serious side effects such as blood clots and strokes are less common with pills that contain less estrogen. A woman considering oral contraceptive pills to control their acne should discuss the pros and cons with her doctor.

Women typically have drier, more sensitive skin as an adult than they did as a teenager and therefore should talk to their dermatologist about an appropriate skin care program. Gently washing the face with mild facial soap is usually recommended and scrubbing should be avoided. Scrubbing can irritate the skin and make acne worse. Toners containing glycolic acid or salicylic acid may help remove the oils that contribute to the development of acne during the premenstrual period. Toner can also be an effective tool for those with oily skin.

Since some acne treatment can cause dryness women should try to use a light water based moisturizer. Daily sun protection is very important as some acne medications can increase the skin's ability to burn and become damaged in the direct sunlight. When buying make up products always look for products labeled non-comedogenic, these do not clog or block the pores and will be less likely to cause acne. Your dermatologist is your guide to treatment options and skin care products that can work together with your acne treatment to improve the look of your skin.

Popping the Pill to Prevent Pimples

In this day of diet pills, and other pills or various other instant relief of other medical problems, is popping a pill to prevent pimples something you should try?

It's a common misconception only teenagers have acne. In truth, all ages can get pimples and suffer from them at any time of their life. In fact, increasingly, women are getting acne well into their adult years. Some women have found it helpful to take a low dosage of birth control pills and it helps their acne clear up. The birth control pill is hormone manipulation.

One birth control pill that has proven effective is Ortho Tri-Cyclen. It successfully reduces the male hormones, androgens, and regulates the female hormones so hormonal imbalances are not as severe. Hormones can be a major cause of acne breakouts. Some women are genetically prone to more drastic hormone mood swings because of oil glands that are more sensitive to hormones and higher levels of androgen.

The hormone balancing birth control plan has been proven in studies to increase the chance of the skin clearing.

There are some side effects to taking the birth control pill, so you need to know if this pill is what you really want to help clear up outbreaks of acne. Some of the side effects are weight gain, increased chance of hypertension, diabetes, heart attack, stroke, and blood clots. Women who smoke are in greater risk from these potentially deadly side effects.

No matter what your age, if your acne is severe, a drug is popular for clearing severe cases of acne. Accutane is used only after comprehensive regimes of oral antibiotics have been tried and not been successful. Therapy is started with a low dose, then increasing the dosage after several weeks. A treatment of Accutane normally lasts for 16 to 20 weeks.

There are some dangers of taking the drug Accutane. You will need to make your decision based on several different facts. It does have severe side effects and you will need to look at that before deciding to take this medication. If your case is severe enough to cause emotional anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, you may want to take it.

If you can control your acne with other treatments or medications, you may not want to risk taking Accutane. If you have a history of depression in your immediate family or you have that history, it could worsen that condition. If there is any chance of you becoming pregnant, you should not take this medication. There are some pros and cons to taking the pill Accutane.

Here are the pros of Accutane:

Accutane does significantly decrease pimples in nearly 75% of those that take it.

It does help prevent severe scarring from acne outbreaks.

It can help with the emotional upheaval such as depression, loss of self-esteem and anxiety.

If your acne returns after the first course is completed, it isn't usually as severe and another course of treatment can be taken.

Accutane can avoid severe scarring and years of expensive treatments.

The cons of Accutane must be included in this report as well:

Accutane had been determined to cause severe birth defects in babies of women who became pregnant while taking this drug.

Use effective birth control to avoid becoming pregnant and do not get pregnant for at least a month after you stop taking Accutane.

Accutane has been linked to depression, psychosis and suicidal thought or attempts. It shouldn't be taken if you have a family history of depression.

Other significant side effects include dry skin, mouth, and eyes. These do seem to be temporary only.

Headaches and muscle pain are more side effects and occasionally, cholesterol and triglyceride levels may increase. Regular blood tests are needed to check these conditions and check liver function.

One other important factor to making your decision is the medication itself is expensive. So, if you decide that you are a candidate to pop a pill for your pimples, please look at all the facts. Both the birth control pill and Accutane has proven effective for clearing or helping to keep severe acne at bay. You will have to decide if the side effects are worth the advantages of taking pills to help your condition.

Pregnancy Pimples – Causes and Treatments

People are all different. Some people go through their entire lives with so few pimples they can actually count them while others lost count well before their fourteenth birthday. Some woman who have acne problems find that their acne actually clears up during pregnancy while others who have had very few pimples during their youth find that pregnancy also gives birth to skin problems.

You may or may not be far removed from your adolescence and from those skin problems that plague most adolescents but adulthood does not, it turns out, make you 'bullet-proof' or, in this case, pimple-proof. The cause of those adolescent pimples was the hormonal imbalance that comes with puberty and follows you through the teenage years and now that you're pregnant -- there go those hormones again.

During pregnancy, exactly like it was during adolescence, higher levels of the hormone called androgen will cause the sebaceous glands in your skin (the glands that produce your natural skin oils) to get bigger and create more skin oil (called sebum). That increased level of sebum can combine with the thousands of dead skin cells that we slough off every minute of our lives and block your pores. Blocked pores create the perfect environment for a bacterium called P.acnes to go to work and cause an inflammation and a breakout of acne blemishes. (That P.acnes bacterium, by the way, is a natural bacterium that is always present in your skin -- even the healthiest skin.)

It is a fact, but not a consolation, that about 50% of adult females, with or without the hormone imbalance caused by pregnancy, have problems with some form of acne. You can also take solace in the fact that those frequent pimple problems you experience during pregnancy are not only perfectly normal, but very common.

If you had acne problems during your youth that cleared up in adulthood or if you had a tendency to have a breakout of pimples just before your periods, you are most likely to experience some acne problems during pregnancy. If you are dealing with pregnancy acne you may find, as most woman do, that the worst of it will be during the first trimester. As the pregnancy progresses into the second trimester, estrogen levels increase and you may see the acne problem improve or even disappear.

Don't take that trip to the drugstore just yet: As bothersome as acne may be, when you're

pregnant you have to be very cautious, not only about what you put IN your body but about what you put ON your body. Acne medications, even the over-the-counter variety, are drugs and should not be used during pregnancy without the advice and consent of your doctor.

During pregnancy, the best way to keep your skin blemish-free is to treat it as gently as you would a priceless antique. Wash your face two or three times a day but don't scrub it and don't over-cleanse it -- washing too much will rob your skin of its natural oil and cause those pesky sebaceous glands to overproduce to make up for it. Use a mild soap that is oil free and then rinse your face with lukewarm water to get rid of all of the soap residue and just pat it dry with a soft towel -- again, don't scrub it. After washing your face use an oil-free moisturizer.

There are many skin care/cosmetic products on the market that are made for delicate skin -- while you are pregnant, consider your skin to be delicate skin.

A couple other tips:

Drinking lots of water (6 to 8 glasses a day) will help keep your skin and your body hydrated and moisturized

Try not to touch your pimples and if you do, wash your hands to get the bacteria off your hands so you don't make the problem worse by spreading it to other parts of your skin.

Don't pick your pimples -- if you do you could wind up with acne scars. Acne goes away, scars do not.

Acne Medications: Don't use any acne medications without the approval of your doctor.

Some ingredients in some acne medications that can be particularly harmful during pregnancy are:

Tetracycline (an oral antibiotic that has been linked to poor bone growth and discolored teeth in babies)

Salicylic Acid (a common ingredient in over-the-counter acne treatments)

Tretinoin (sold under the brand name Retin-A)

Isotretinoin (sold under the brand name Accutane). Accutane, used during pregnancy has been linked to birth defects, miscarriage and infant death. Read the U.S. FDA bulletin about Accutane at <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2005/NEW01218.html>.

FAQ's on Spa Pool Acne

Here are some frequently asked questions about the acne-like condition that is associated with swimming pools and hot tubs.

1. What is spa pool acne?

Spa pool acne is a common (and medically incorrect) name for "pseudomonas folliculitis" which is commonly known as "spa pool folliculitis"

2. What is the difference between acne and folliculitis?

Folliculitis can look similar to acne but folliculitis is a bacterial infection of hair follicles caused by an external source of bacteria; acne is also a bacterial infection but it is caused by a natural bacterium (P.acnes) that is always present on healthy skin. P.acnes only causes trouble when pores in the skin become blocked, causing the P.acnes bacteria to build up.

3. What then is spa pool folliculitis?

Spa pool folliculitis is a skin condition that looks very much like acne but is caused by a bacterial infection of hair follicles. This condition is most commonly caused by bacteria (P. aeruginosa) found in poorly maintained public swimming pools, Jacuzzis and hot tubs.

4. How does the bacteria get in the water?

When warm water (such as in a heated swimming pool, hot tub or Jacuzzi) is not properly disinfected, bacteria from the bodies of the people using it will build up and the potential for infecting other pool or hot tub users increases. This is especially true for public venues (swimming pools, hot tubs, communal baths) that have not been properly treated with chlorine and other pool chemicals.

5. What does spa pool folliculitis look like?

Spa pool folliculitis appears as a rash that consists of small red itchy or tender bumps. This rash will mainly appear in areas that were covered by a bathing suit and some of the 'bumps' may be pustular (containing pus).

6. Does the rash associated with spa pool folliculitis appear while you are in the water?

No! It normally takes from eight hours to five days to appear.

7. Does spa pool folliculitis make you physically sick?

Not usually sick, just itchy. Some few people may experience some physical effects such as earaches, sore throat, nausea and vomiting, headache and/or a mild fever.

8. How long will the rash last?

If you have healthy, normal skin, the rash should go away without treatment in seven to ten days. If, however, you have excessively oily or dry skin or have an existing skin condition the rash may last for several weeks.

9. How can you avoid getting spa pool folliculitis?

The best way to avoid spa pool folliculitis is to only use swimming pools, hot tubs and other water sources that you are certain have been treated with the proper pool chemicals and pools that are maintained on a regular basis. It may also help to wear loose fitting bathing suits because putting on a tight fitting bathing suit may cause mild physical injury to hair follicles and leave them more susceptible to infection. Another thing that causes injury to hair follicles is shaving. Women who shave their legs or "bikini line" and are then exposed to the *P. aeruginosa* bacteria are especially susceptible to spa pool folliculitis.

In order to minimize the susceptibility, it is best to use an electric razor rather than a bladed razor or, if using a bladed razor, shave with a very light pressure and shave in the direction of the hair growth. One other tip for avoiding spa pool folliculitis include taking a shower as soon as possible after swimming and be sure to wash off any tanning lotions or oils that you used before or during your swim. Oil will trap contaminated pool water and increase your chances of getting the folliculitis rash.

10. How is spa pool folliculitis treated?

A mild case of spa pool folliculitis may go away, untreated, within seven to ten days but may stick around for several weeks. If there is a troublesome associated itch or if the rash appears to be excessively irritated or getting worse instead of better, consult your doctor even before using an over-the-counter anti-itch medication. Your physician may prescribe an oral or topical antibiotic. An improperly treated case of folliculitis or a severe case can get progressively worse and develop into furuncles (boils) and then into carbuncles.

Also, take whatever steps necessary to make sure the responsible pool or hot tub gets treated with the proper chemicals.

Acne Dysmorphia—Some Info About This Little Known Condition

What is acne Dysmorphia? This is not a physical condition caused by acne, but is a mental illness that can be debilitating. It shows up as a total preoccupation with some deformity, in this case acne. It makes the sufferer think they are ugly or disgusting, their acne is horrible, and their skin is awful. They are always near a mirror checking on their condition and obsessively check for flaws.

Billions of people have acne outbreaks in their lifetime. It's the most common skin disorder known today. While acne can be treated medically, acne dysmorphia is a symptom that can be treated of medications that treat acne. Acne dysmorphia has little to do with acne at all. It's a different disorder and is related to anorexia nervosa. Weight is the trigger for anorexia nervosa, and acne is the trigger for acne dysmorphia.

With this disease, a person is obsessed with their skin. It isn't unusual for someone suffering from acne dysmorphia to check mirrors hundreds of times a day to check for blemishes. What might be a mild case of acne can make them believe they are totally disfigured and ugly to look at. It can cause them to pick at their imperfections and tear away their skin until they bleed.

It's hard for someone to confide in another person that they have been caught up in this obsession. Just as it is for those suffering from anorexia, they are denying the fact they have a problem to everyone, including him or herself. Depression is also associated with acne dysmorphia. It can cause patients to isolate themselves, stay away from other people, and ruin their social life. If it is left untreated, it could cause the patients to harm themselves.

So, what is the cure for acne dysmorphia? It's important to remember that dysmorphia is not because of the acne but a mental disorder that can become a crippling disorder. Depression caused by this condition could lead to suicide. The treatment must start with the mental aspects first. Frustration can result in suicide if not actively treated.

Acne dysmorphia has been successfully treated with a serotonin reuptake inhibitor and hypnosis has been effective in treating this disorder. Another form of treatment is behavioral therapy and has been found to be effective in treating acne dysmorphia.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a psychological treatment for many depression related disorders. This treatment can be group therapy, individual treatment by a psychologist or psychiatrist and will help patients deal with their problem. Group therapy sessions with others who suffer from the same problem helps to be able to talk about your problem freely with others that are in the same situation. Behavioral therapy might include taking antidepressants or other medications that will work in conjunction with therapy.

It's important to note, individuals must be treated with the type of treatment that fits them best. Group therapy may not be for someone who is extremely shy, but it could be for someone who is normally outgoing and willing to talk about his or her problem. Often, just sharing and knowing someone else has walked the same path you are walking helps to overcome the problem. Individual therapy with a trusted professional can work wonders especially if medication is used with the treatment. Learning to think positively and helping achieve a better self-esteem can be a huge help in treating this type of mental illness.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy can help you resist the negative thought patterns that can disrupt your life. This therapy can help you to reframe your negative thoughts into positive affirmations of your worth. It is so important to relegate these negative impressions into the back of your mind and change them into positive reinforcements. This might take a while but it can be done. This therapy works for those with depression or other mental problems and it can work with those suffering from acne dysmorphia.

If you feel you or a loved one has a problem with acne dysmorphia, get them to a qualified professional. Ignoring the problem is not an option and could cause the person to do harm to him or herself.

Rosacea – It Looks like Acne but Isn't

You wake up in the morning and find your face is red, bumpy, and all-around unsightly. Acne has happened overnight? Well, not always. Even though it often looks like acne, rosacea is a common skin condition with acne-like symptoms that can be as psychologically scarring as

acne. Rosacea afflicts many people, especially adults. In fact, the prevalence of rosacea among adults has caused it to be termed 'adult acne' by some skin professionals.

In reality, rosacea is very different from acne. Acne is a general term used to describe the blemishes and lesions that can erupt on the face, chest, back, and other areas of the body due to pores clogged with sebum. Rosacea, however, is caused by enlarged blood vessels under the skin. While acne usually appears during adolescence, rosacea usually begins between the ages of 30 and 50.

What causes rosacea? Rosacea is thought to be a vascular disorder that afflicts people in their 30s, 40s, or 50s, although it can occur during adolescence. How do you know if you are getting rosacea? The clearest symptom is you notice your skin becoming red, especially around your T-zone areas of nose, cheeks, and chin.

Most rosacea patients describe a feeling of tightness and dryness in their face. Their skin may look and feel parched, and may become very sensitive to creams, lotions, or ointments. Eventually, most rosacea sufferers will notice telangiectasia, the small, nearly imperceptible blood vessels that appear in the afflicted areas.

As the rosacea worsens, patients may experience their complexion becoming consistently redder. Often, rosacea sufferers may experience a 'red nose.' They tend to blush easily, and they may develop swelling and acne-like symptoms like pimples and bumps. The rosacea sufferer may also notice that their pores seem to become more prominent. Swelling is not uncommon, especially in the area of the nose and cheeks.

In more severe cases, fibroplasia may occur. Fibroplasia occurs when the skin produces excess facial tissue, causing a distortion of the facial area. At its most severe form, fibroplasia becomes so widespread that the face becomes swollen and enlarged, especially the area around the nose, creating a condition called rhinophyma.

Obviously, rosacea is a potentially serious skin disorder that can seriously alter a person's appearance and permanently damage their self-esteem. Fortunately, rosacea is highly treatable. In many cases, simply taking a few simple precautions can control rosacea. Rosacea appears to be at least partly hereditary.

Both men and women appear to suffer similar rates, but men are usually affected more severely. If you think you may be prone to rosacea, strive to avoid excess sunlight, and drink lots of water to keep your skin hydrated. People who suffer from frequent headaches or migraines, certain eye disorders, and other skin disorders may be more prone to developing rosacea.

When should you seek professional help? Visit a dermatologist if you manifest any of the following symptoms: excessive redness in the face, especially the T-zone area; enlarged blood vessels; eye irritation; acne-like pimples and bumps.

Many skin professionals suggest that certain environmental factors may aggravate signs of rosacea. These include direct sunlight, extreme temperatures, and pollutants. Other things that may exacerbate rosacea include hot liquids, alcohol and caffeine, spicy foods, and stress.

There are professionals that differentiate between two different types of rosacea. One manifestation of the disorder is characterized as vascular rosacea. The symptoms of vascular rosacea may include excessive flushing and redness of the skin. The blood vessels of the face may swell and manifest themselves on the skin as thin red lines. Sometimes, the skin may feel perceptibly warm. Another common form of rosacea is described as inflammatory rosacea. The symptoms of inflammatory rosacea may include the appearance of pimples, bumps, and pustules. Inflammation and irritation of the eyes may also be present.

Treatment of rosacea consists primarily of treating the symptoms of redness and inflammation. A dermatologist may prescribe topical or oral medications aimed at controlling the symptoms of inflammation and redness. If you suffer from some form of rosacea, your doctor may also advise you to avoid hot or spicy foods, caffeine, alcohol, and excessive sunlight. Patients are also advised to wash their skin with hypoallergenic soap or cleansers, and to avoid synthetic perfumes and lotions.

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