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Acne Treatments to Clear Your Skin Now

Choosing a Dermatologist That Sees You, Not Just the Zits

When you suffer from acne, you are at your most vulnerable. Your self-esteem may be at its lowest points, you may feel self-conscious about the way you look, and you may even avoid leaving the house. Ironically enough, when you find yourself suffering from acne, reaching out to a stranger may be one of the best things you can do for yourself. That stranger is a dermatologist, a trained skin specialist who has probably seen it all, and who can give you valuable advice about your skin, and prescribe an appropriate treatment.

If you're thinking about visiting a dermatologist for the first time, you are probably feeling apprehensive. This is absolutely normal. After all, you (or your health insurance) are going to pay a stranger to pick and prod at your face. You will be showing off a part of your body that you probably spend most of the time trying to hide. But the effort and perhaps slight embarrassment is well worth the reward—a new chance at radiant, healthy-looking skin.

When seeking out a dermatologist, make a list of what you are looking for. What do you like about your primary physician? Are you most concerned about someone who is sensitive to your concerns and has good chair-side manner? Are you more worried about having someone with flexible hours who can accommodate your hectic schedule? For some, the most important thing is having a very knowledgeable doctor with reputation and extensive training. Still others seek out dermatologists because they specialize in certain skin conditions. Whatever your specific needs and interests, a good dermatologist will treat all his or her patients with respect, patience, sensitivity, and courtesy.

Well-trained dermatologists will be able to answer all your questions and provide you with several treatment options. Before your first visit, take the time to prepare a list of questions. You should find someone you feel comfortable talking to, and be able to carry out an open dialogue with. If you have any questions about your medication, treatment options, or anything else, don't hesitate to ask. Most dermatologists, if not all doctors, like their patients to be prepared and to demonstrate a vested interest in their treatment plan.

If you find your dermatologist difficult to talk to, consider finding a new doctor. You should never feel rushed, ignored, or unable to ask questions. One thing most patients avoid doing is revealing their anxiety about visiting a dermatologist. It can actually be to your benefit to let your doctor know about your nerves. This can help your dermatologist become more sensitive to your concerns, and will probably result in a better visit for both of you.

If you have decided to take that important step of finding a good dermatologist, here are a few tips for finding the best doctor in your area. If the cost of treatment is paramount to you, consult your health insurance to see if they cover dermatology, and whether you are restricted to a network of dermatologists. Try to make an appointment as early as possible. Even if your skin has temporarily cleared, the earlier you see a dermatologist, the better.

What are the qualifications of a well-trained dermatologist? A well-trained dermatologist will be

a medical doctor that is board certified and trained in dermatology. The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) should certify the dermatologist. Certified dermatologists will have graduated from an accredited medical school, and have completed between three to five years of specialized dermatology training. This certification requires that they pass oral examinations and a comprehensive written exam.

Other things to look for when looking for a dermatologist: membership in the American Academy of Dermatology. Members of the American Academy of Dermatology receive mandatory continuing education classes, they are peer reviewed, and must remain in continual good standing to remain members. You should also try to find a dermatologist with experience. The dermatologist with several years experience is more apt to make an accurate diagnosis and find appropriate treatment.

If you are seeking help for a somewhat rare skin disorder, you will want to find a dermatologist with extensive research and training experience with that disorder. Also, never discount the advice and recommendations of others. Many times, the best dermatologists are those that are recommended by trusted friends or family members.

Combating Acne with Accutane – Just the Basics

One of the most famous and controversial of all acne treatment therapies, Accutane (Isotretinoin) has long been seen as the stalwart of acne treatments. The 'last resort' acne drug of choice, Accutane continues to be a popular treatment option for acne sufferers who have tried everything else. The Hoffman-LaRoche pharmaceutical company, who first introduced the drug in the United States in 1982, manufactures Accutane.

Dermatologists and other medical doctors frequently prescribe Accutane to individuals who suffer from moderate and severe forms of acne. Most commonly, Accutane is prescribed to patients who suffer from severe nodular acne. Most people who have been prescribed Accutane have tried other treatments such as topical agents and antibiotic therapies, to no avail.

The molecular structure of Accutane is similar to Vitamin A. And with good cause: Accutane is actually a Vitamin A analog, or retinoid. Most doses of Accutane range from 10mg to 40 mg doses.

The reason that Accutane is seen as the 'last resort' acne treatment option is because of its potency. After four to five months of regular use, Accutane therapy usually results in a noticeable clearing of acne. Because of its potency, only moderate or severe cases of acne are treated with Accutane. What can be classified as moderate or severe acne? While there are no clear delineations, an easy rule of thumb is that moderate and severe acne causes some form of scarring or other types of disfigurements. Also, moderate and severe cases of acne usually do not respond to conventional treatments.

Although Accutane has gotten a bit of a negative reputation for its health risks, some doctors believe that it is actually safer than long-term antibiotic treatment. Over two million people

have used Accutane, so its efficacy rates and safety have been well documented. Because it is indeed so potent, Accutane must only be administered under the continued supervision of a medical professional.

How does Accutane work? Accutane works by effectively shutting down the oil production of your skin. Accutane accomplishes this by forcing the sebaceous gland to mature. First, testosterone forces the sebaceous gland to produce different kinds of oils that line the hair follicle. Then the oil production level is stabilized so that the composition of the oil is no longer able to clog a person's pores. Accutane also prevents too much keratin, the stuff of skin, to be produced, thus also preventing the clogging of pores and formation of pimples.

How long before the effects of Accutane can be visibly seen? On average, it may take up to two months before visible improvement can be detected. Accutane should be taken with a full meal to increase the absorption of the drug. It is recommended that Accutane be taken with fatty foods, such as whole or 2% milk products. This allows the drug to be more readily absorbed.

What are some of the drawbacks of using Accutane? Although sometimes termed a 'miracle drug,' Accutane also has a number of drawbacks. Many times, users will experience a significant worsening of symptoms before things get better. Most users report a severe drying of their skin, lips, and dry eyes. Most importantly, Accutane has been linked to severe birth defects.

Women of childbearing age must stringently avoid pregnancy while using Accutane. Women must use at least two forms of reliable contraception to prevent pregnancy. Recently, Accutane has also been linked to an increased risk of depression. Because Accutane is a derivative of Vitamin A, patients undergoing Accutane therapy must avoid consuming Vitamin A.

Accutane can also cause permanent damage to the liver. Because of this risk, patients undergoing Accutane treatment must be supervised carefully. If you are taking Accutane, you will have to undergo regular blood tests to ensure that your blood-fat levels remain stable.

What are the efficacy rates of Accutane? Accutane has a pretty good success rate, with approximately 35 to 38% of patients experiencing complete remission after one course of Accutane. In more stubborn acne cases, your dermatologist may choose to give you more than one course of the medication. After one course of treatment, approximately 70% of all patients experience remission from symptoms.

How long is a full course of treatment? One course of treatment usually takes about four to six months. Doses vary according to the patient's body weight.

Diet vs. Zits – Will Changing What You Eat Help Clear Up Breakouts?

It used to be common wisdom that eating greasy foods and chocolate would result in a vicious breakout. But later, dermatologists and other skin professionals told us that there is no proven scientific connection between food and acne. But still...does what you eat really have a direct

influence on the status of your face?

The straight answer is: no, bad food does not inherently cause bad skin. But, as most doctors will tell you, what you choose to put in your body will have a definite effect on your health, including your skin health. Sugary foods, excessive caffeine, and greasy, fatty snacks—all have a negative effect on our bodies and overall health. If your skin is particularly susceptible to acne, maintaining a poor diet will definitely not help the situation.

Choosing foods that are high in fat, sugar content, refined carbohydrates can all prove damaging to your body and skin health. Research shows that eating too much sugar and refined carbohydrates can lead to a surge in insulin. This in turn may create a condition referred to as IGF-1, where an increase in insulin creates the production of excess male hormones. Excessive male hormones can create an excess of sebum, the greasy stuff that can clog pores, attract bacteria, and create monster zits. IGF-1 is also believed to cause keratinocytes to multiply, which can wreak havoc on skin.

Saturated fats: These are the bad guys of the food world. Doctors have consistently warned of the health dangers of consuming saturated fats and trans fats. What exactly is so bad about these types of fats? Saturated fats have an overall negative effect on the body, weakening the immune system, promoting inflammation, and for acne sufferers, perhaps raising the skin's oil production level. To have the best complexion possible, keep your body healthy and filled with good, health-promoting nutrients. You should strive to reduce saturated fats because they promote inflammation, and will not help you in your battle against acne.

The power of good oils: Even though certain oils are high in saturated and trans fats, that doesn't mean all oils are bad. In fact, certain oils are absolutely essential to your health. These essential fatty acids reduce inflammation, and help promote healthy skin, nails and hairs. What oils should you add to your regular diet? Flax oil, olive oil, and fish oil are all good oils that should become a part of your diet. Flax oil and fish oil in particular are recommended for the maintenance of a healthy body and glowing complexion.

Using vitamins and minerals to battle acne: You should also strive to make sure you consume vitamins and minerals on a regular basis to promote a healthy skin-enriching diet. Vitamin A is paramount for promoting healthy skin. Avocados and carrots are excellent sources of Vitamin A. Vitamin B-6, Vitamin C, and Zinc are other important nutrients for promoting a good complexion. In order to ensure you're getting all the vitamins and minerals you need to help fight acne, eat a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, and essential fatty acids.

Food allergies and acne: Ok, so to promote a healthy zit-free complexion, you just need to eat lots of vegetables, fruits, and get your daily drizzle of good oils, right? Well, yes. But one of the lesser-considered aspects of the food and acne debate is the role that food allergies play in promoting acne. Sometimes, people experience severe cases of acne, even if they lead a very healthy diet and have never suffered from severe acne before. In these cases, a potential food allergy may be suspected.

If you suspect your acne is caused by a food allergy, begin by increasing your daily amount of water consumption. Then try to rule out the root cause of your potential acne. Common causes of food allergies include dairy products, excess sugar, and certain refined flours and

grains. Also, avoid foods rich in iodine, which have been linked to acne in the past. Iodine-rich foods may include salt, liver, cheese, crabs, shellfish, clams, and kelp products. If you consume iodized salt, make the switch to sea salt. If you find dairy products exacerbate your acne, consider switching to soy or rice milk and cheese products.

Shedding a Light on the Zit Subject-How Light Therapy Works on Acne

Does light therapy help with your acne? A clear light laser is being used in a new therapeutic light system to treat acne and help remove the scars. The ClearLight laser is suitable for all body parts and there are no known side effects. It can work alone or with cosmetic cleanup therapies and medication.

Light wave therapy uses a high intensity blue light and not ultraviolet rays. This light kills the bacteria causing the acne and may help dry up the excess oil that is a large part of the acne problem. It doesn't damage the skin as ultraviolet light can. Laser light waves target two factors that cause acne. One, they use heat to damage the oil glands that pour out excessive oil, and two they work on the bacteria that is present in the pores that cause pimples, whiteheads, and blackheads. These treatments cause a minimum of pain and discomfort and promote regeneration of new skin, which is useful to treat scarring.

Light therapy for acne is effective to reduce scarring and to treat the active acne as well. Light laser therapy is a localized treatment, safe and has no adverse side effects. It's been shown to be effective on acne problems that other medications and treatment have not done.

The Hammersmith Hospital in West London began treating 30 patients who suffered moderate to mild acne and placed them in a clinical trial. Within three months, they had significant decrease in their acne outbreaks. Those patients that only thought they were being treated didn't have any improvement in their acne outbreak.

The treatment consists of the affected area to short bursts of light called pulse dye laser therapy. Initially used to combat wrinkles it stimulated the production of collagen. It also was used to combat scars from severe cases of acne, when it was found to be affecting active blemishes. Doctors were brought in to look at the clinical evidence and agreed that light treatment was successful in treating live acne. A study that was recently published states that a single session of five minutes can have an effect on acne for up to twelve months.

Patients that took part in the study lost 70 to 80 percent of their acne, and one patient's spots disappeared completely. The treatment is being widely used in private clinics and started out to be costly. As with all new technologies, the price has come down and more professionals are using light therapy in treatments for their patients.

Light therapy has only been used in the last few years and more work is needed to confirm any clinical benefits. Imagine the impact on those individuals in economical terms. Instead of continuing drug treatment, occasional light therapy treatments can be a big help who have moderate cases of acne.

One patient stated the treatments only take about five minutes and with each treatment, her acne was much less prominent. Another benefit of using laser light therapy is that it doesn't cause any discoloration of the patient's skin. Treatment sessions can last from five minutes to 20 and the patient experiences a slight stinging sensation while undergoing treatment. A topical anesthetic can be applied before the treatment and the application of ice was used after the treatment.

New laser technology has played an increasingly important role in treating acne scars. New techniques work to promote collagen growth under the scar without creating any injury on the outside.

Light therapy is a great blessing to those that have extreme cases of acne, as they are very successful in treating the condition without costly medications. The improvement of the treatment of chronic acne can change a person's life for the better. Self-esteem is raised and general wellbeing is increased. Depression is lessened as confidence soars with the clearing of the acne infected area.

If you or someone you love were afflicted with moderate to severe cases of acne, it would be worthwhile to look into light treatment. Non-invasive and works in a shorter time than topical ointments and antibiotics, this may be the best thing to happen for acne sufferers of any age.

Long and Short on Lasers in Acne Therapy

Laser light therapy is a proven effective way to prevent scarring from chronic cases of acne as well as healing the outbreak as well. Since acne is the most commonly diagnosed skin disorder in the United States, researchers are always looking for new and innovative ways to treat it. Patients are often frustrated when it comes to treating acne and the scarring it leaves. Over-the-counter medications and herbal cures are ineffective in some acute cases of acne.

Scientists now believe that acne is not caused by diet or stress but by hormones, too much oil, and bacteria. When a portion of your body becomes infected, white blood cells flood to the affected area to fight off the infection. That creates the gunk that is found inside an acne pustule.

In the last few years, big strides have been made in treating acne scars. Nonabrasive laser surgery has been used in treating scars from bad cases of acne. Once the first outbreak has cleared up, the scars that remain are a constant reminder of the acne outbreak. After just a couple of laser treatments, the scars that remain from acne episodes can be successfully treated. Mostly the effectiveness comes from new collagen is promoted under the scars to reduce their effect.

The treatments range from five minutes to twenty minutes and there is little or only a slight discomfort during the treatment. Three to five minute therapies are given at monthly intervals seem to be the ones that create the best results. There is a marked decrease in scarring and lesions after just a few treatments. Side effects are few and usually mild redness and swelling for a short time and will not interfere with the patient's daily activities.

Laser light therapy is not that old. New studies are still being made about which lasers are best suited for live acne and for acne scars. It was first used to improve the skins production of collagen to fight fine lines and wrinkles. As the technology advanced, it proved to be helpful in reducing the scar tissue from severe outbreaks of acne. In further testing, they found that live, active acne was also being helped by the light therapy.

There are different colors of laser light therapy; one of the most common uses a high intensity blue light. Pulses of light kill the bacteria causing the acne on the skin but do not damage the skin as the ultraviolet rays can. The laser heat also damages the oil glands and prevents them from secreting the oil that plugs the pores and cause acne. It promotes the renewal of new skin, which helps to ease the impact of scarring from acne outbreaks.

These laser light therapy treatments are considered safe, but when seeking treatment, be sure the one treating you is accredited and adept at working with the laser.

Minor outbreaks of acne can be treated with short treatments that usually only need to be repeated monthly. More intense cases will need lengthier sessions and they will need to be given more often.

Laser treatment is a fairly new innovation but are becoming increasingly common, especially for teenagers who have not responded favorably to topical treatments or oral medications. For adults, laser light therapy is being used as the first line of defense against an outbreak of acne.

Many patients are thrilled with the way laser light therapy has worked for them. They have tried pills, creams, and natural cures and none have worked. Covering with a thick layer of make up is also not the answer to severe outbreaks of acne and sometimes will just worsen the problem. One particular patient who was treated with short five-minute treatments began to see results immediately. With each treatment, her spots and lesions became fewer and fewer. On some days, she has no spots at all, or they are small. The laser light therapy has given her more confidence and boosted her self-esteem.

If you have a teenager or loved one who has been affected by acne and acne scars, it will be worthwhile to look for a trained professional to see if laser light therapy can work for them.

The Cryotherapy Option for Acne Sufferers

Dermatologists feel that virtually every case of acne can be resolved. However, there are certain 'facts of life' that the acne sufferer must understand and accept:

There is no overnight cure. What works for Jane or Joe may not work for you. You might need professional help.

There is no "overnight" cure: Resolution of acne problems takes time. Any doctors, clinics or treatments that promise "fast," "miraculous" or "overnight" results will 'suck you in' but, in the end, they will disappoint you. For the best treatments on even mild cases of acne you may not

see results for 6 to 8 weeks. Then, once your acne starts to show a major improvement, you will need to continue treatments to prevent a new breakout. Also, if you are using a treatment method that does not improve your acne after 6 to 8 weeks, you will need to switch treatments.

What works for Jane or Joe may not work for you: Everyone is different -- you may be tired of hearing that, but its true. As far as acne treatments are concerned, what works for one person may not work as well on someone else, or it may work even better for someone else. There are many factors involved including the cause of the acne, the skin type of the person affected by acne and the kind of lesions that develop.

You might need professional help: In the medical world, there is a wide range of causes for acne. Because of the fact that not every medicine works the same for everyone, complicated by the fact that there are hundreds of treatment options advertised -- you may want to consult a dermatologist. It just makes sense. When you break a bone you don't try to fix it yourself -- why try to fix that 'broken skin" by yourself? A dermatologist knows what to look for and will almost certainly make your journey through the acne years of your life much easier.

Before prescribing treatment, dermatologists consider many factors that are unique to your situation: how severe the acne is, the types of blemishes you exhibit, any other medical conditions you may have, your age, your skin type and your lifestyle choices. Knowing all this allows a dermatologist to draw on his or her training and experience and tailor a treatment for you that has a very good chance of bringing a good resolution to your bad situation.

Cryotherapy: Cryotherapy is one option that is only available through a dermatologist and it is an option that is frequently used by many dermatologists.

Here's how it works: Typically, liquid nitrogen or solid carbon dioxide is applied to an area of skin, freezing it. Light freezing causes peeling of the skin, moderate freezing causes blistering and hard freezing causes scabbing. This procedure is used as a treatment for acne as well as a method to remove scars and growths and excise some skin cancers. The freezing agent may be sprayed on to the skin or swabbed on, but the end result is the same.

Freezing has been found to be a very effective, reliable and relatively inexpensive way to remove most of the surface skin lesions associated with acne. When used as an acne treatment, an area of skin is lightly frozen so, when the top layer of skin is shed, any whiteheads and blackheads that were present are also removed. A cryotherapy treatment may also be used to help pimples heal faster, which has the ultimate effect of reducing any acne scarring.

Cryotherapy treatments for acne are usually performed once a week. Side effects of this treatment may include stinging and redness of the skin; there may also be some pain for some period after the treatment. The painful aftereffects of cryotherapy may be reduced by applying a steroid to the treated area immediately after the treatment. In very rare cases, a patient with extremely sensitive skin may experience some swelling and blistering after a cryotherapy session.

Cryotherapy is also sometimes referred to as cryosurgery and it is, in fact, a form of surgery in the sense that the dermatologist is removing a layer of skin along with the acne blemishes. This method of acne treatment has been available since the 1960s and has proven to be very

effective as an acne treatment option but it is not nearly as well known or as widely advertised as over-the-counter medications.

Vitamin Remedies to Banish Those Breakouts

Most people in today's modern world are deficient in vitamins, minerals and herbs that your body needs to work properly. Your skin is the largest organ of your body and it needs the right nutrition to work. If your body gets the required nutrition, it will promote healthy skin and prevent acne. Vitamins and minerals are an essential part of that nutrition and studies show that fewer than 32 percent of Americans eat the required servings of vegetables each day. Avoid eating processed sugar and try to have at least one serving of fruit a day.

Some of these vitamins and minerals are important in helping to flush out free radicals and toxins from your body. Some have antibacterial effects that help promote the building of immunity in the body. These vitamins and minerals are an important part of keeping your pores clean and healing the damaged skin. It should be noted that taking too much of a vitamin or mineral can also be toxic and dangerous. Read the recommended dosage and stick with it. Exceeding the dosage could potentially be dangerous.

What are some of the important vitamins your body needs for blemish free skin?

Vitamin A strengthens the protective tissue of your skin and helps prevent acne. It reduces the production of sebum and works in repairing the tissue that skin and mucous membranes are made of. It's also a powerful antioxidant. Antioxidants are important and needed to help rid your body of toxins that have built up. A lack in Vitamin A can cause acne!

The Complex B vitamins are also helpful in preserving healthy skin. They also help in relieving stress and stress is said to play a major role in causing acne. The B vitamins should always be taken together. Thiamine is an antioxidant, helps circulation, and aids in digestion. Riboflavin works with Vitamin A and is essential for healthy skin, hair, and nails. Niacinamide helps with the metabolism of carbohydrates in your system and improving circulation. Niacinamide shortage in your diet can cause acne. Pantothenic Acid or B5 is popular for helping to reduce stress and is needed for the adrenal glands to function properly. Vitamin B6, or Pyridoxine is important for the correct function of your immune system and antibody production.

Vitamin C with bioflavonoids is also referred to as the "super vitamin." Vitamin C helps at least 300 metabolic functions in your body, is needed for tissue growth and repair, and flushes toxins from your system. Vitamin C also improves immunity and protects against infection. If you have diabetes, check with your doctor for the dosage that is best for your body.

Chromium, widely used for weight loss also helps fight acne. Chromium should be taken in an added form since chromium in foods is not easily absorbed. Much of it is lost in processing and high doses of sugar cause the loss of chromium.

Zinc aids in preventing acne by regulating the activity of the oil glands. It promotes the

healing in tissues and helps to prevent scarring. Zinc promotes a healthier immune system that in turn aids in the healing of wounds. In addition, it is a powerful antioxidant that helps prevent the forming of free radicals, or toxins that can harm your body.

Finally, **Vitamin E** is a powerful antioxidant. It improves healing and tissue repair and prevents cell damage by inhibiting oxidation of fats and the formation of free radicals.

One interesting fact about acne can be noted that is a multivitamin with added chromium supplement will give you most of what your body needs for the day. The recommendation is to take a multivitamin twice a day. It is nearly impossible for your body to process all the nutrients it needs in a multivitamin taken one a day.

Vitamins and minerals to supplement your diet are important but other natural herbs can help control acne too. An application of tea tree oil on a pimple can reduce bacteria and fight inflammation.

Drinking water every day is also important for your body. Drink at least eight glasses of water a day. This routine will help with regular bowel movements and flushing harmful toxins from your body.

What You Should Know About Retin-A Treatments for Acne

Retin-A (Tretinoin gel 0.1%) has been proven to reduce the severity of adolescent acne (acne vulgaris). In a number of different clinical studies, Retin-A proved itself to be more effective in reducing the number of acne blemishes than several other acne medications.

About acne: Acne vulgaris is caused by a hormone imbalance that increases the body's normal level of the male hormone called androgen. This increased 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 hair follicles. Blocked follicles 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 bacteria that is always present in your skin -- even the healthiest skin.)

Acne blemishes are seen most often in adolescents but adults are not immune. Acne blemishes are known as comedones which are large, deep, pus-filled pimples. These comedones go away eventually but will usually leave a scar behind -- that's where Retin-A comes in. Retin-A can significantly reduce the severity of this scarring by making it easier for the body to shed the dead skin that blocks pores -- this reduced blockage reduces the size of comedones and results in less scarring.

Using Retin-A: At bedtime, use a gauze pad or cotton swab to apply a thin layer of Retin-A to the areas of your skin that have acne blemishes. Wash your hands immediately after applying the medication. Don't apply Retin-A near the eyes or mouth or on open cuts; Retin-A can irritate sensitive skin.

Always use acne medication, and all medications, according to the label directions. Retin-A should only be used once a day, using it more frequently than directed or using more than necessary will not make it work better and may have negative consequences: increasing the possibility of side-effects. Remember, even over-the-counter treatments are medications and should be used carefully.

It takes time to start working: When you first start using Retin-A your acne may SEEM to get worse, but don't stop using it -- it may take up to six weeks before the medicine is working to its full potential.

Cosmetics and Retin-A: Cosmetics may be used while using Retin-A but be sure to remove all cosmetic products completely before applying Retin-A.

Pregnancy and Retin-A: Retin-A is a topical medication (applied to the skin) and, when used as directed, less than 10% of the medication will pass into the mother's bloodstream and less than that will reach the baby. More than 10% may get into the bloodstream if the Retin-A is applied to cuts on the skin or breaks in the skin or if more than just the recommended thin coating is used; the less used, the less risk there will be to the baby.

There has been no proven link between the use of Retin-A during pregnancy and birth defects and it is unknown how much, if any of the Retin-A will wind up in breast milk, it may be wise to either switch to an acne product without Retin-A or use the Retin-A medication very sparingly and then only with your doctor's approval.

Side effects of Retin-A and cautions:

Immediately after applying a medication with Retin-A your skin may feel warm; your skin may turn slightly red and you may feel a mild stinging. These effects will go away as your skin adjusts to the medication.

Retin-A may increase your sensitivity to the sun and wind as well as to cold temperatures. Minimize your exposure to the elements, wear protective clothing in the sun and don't use a sunlamp.

Retin-A, when used as directed, may cause itchiness and scaling of the skin; this may be more severe on some people than on others. If more than the necessary amount of Retin-A is used this itching and scaling may be more pronounced.

Since Retin-A's effect on pregnancy is not known for sure, be safe and don't use it if you're pregnant.

Testosterone's Flexing Its Muscle in the Appearance of Acne

Testosterone can be a major cause in the appearance of acne by athletes who are using performance-enhancing drugs. Acne fulminans is a severe form of acne that nearly always

affects males. This type of acne is often brought on with testosterone. Some of the symptoms of this type of acne are, quick onset, severe scarring, painful joints, rising and falling fever, and decreased appetite and weight loss. This type of acne is from legal or illegal use of testosterone. It is cautioned; if you don't need testosterone, don't use it!

Intense scarring is found with those patients who have suffered from acne fulminans. It results from new collagen is formed to heal the cells injured by the acne. This results in excessive scarring. Therefore, in making those muscles bigger you may find the excess testosterone flexes its own muscles by bringing on the onset of this terrible form of acne.

Testosterone comes from cholesterol. The testes in men produce it, and in women, it can be made in smaller quantities in the cells of the ovaries. The placenta also produces it in small quantities. Testosterone was first isolated in a bull in 1935. Many synthetic forms of this hormone have been developed over the years and are available. The different forms are oil for injection, tablets to be taken orally, skin patches and gel for transdermal absorption. Two new ways of delivery are in the works including a roll on delivery, similar to a roll on deodorant and a nasal spray. They are currently not on the market.

Manufactured testosterone has been used over the years for many conditions and purposes other than replacement of the hormone. It has varied success with infertility, erectile dysfunction, osteoporosis, and bone marrow stimulations. In the early 1940's, it was being described as the new anti-aging wonder drug. Since then, the drug has been widely in the public eye for its muscle development improvement, strength, and endurance. Used by athletes to improve and strengthen their muscles and scandals have been part of the headlines in sports since then.

It has since listed as a controlled substance by the United States Congress. Strict testing now goes on before athletes perform in the Olympics and testing is now a normal procedure in several sports organizations. The use of anabolic steroids became known in regards to the Olympics in the 1988 summer games. Most recently, Congress has looked into illegal use of steroids in Major League Baseball.

How does testosterone work in both the male and female body? Free testosterone flows through the body and it then binds to androgen receptors. Males and females have androgen receptors but they respond to them in different ways. They manifest differences in prenatal effects that occur between seven and twelve weeks of gestation.

Testosterone is important for increased bone density and strength and height growth and maturation. This also effects maturation of the sex organs, the growth of facial and torso hair and the deepening of the voice. At puberty, rising androgen levels have visible effects on both girls and boys. The beginning of puberty can cause adult-type body odor, fine upper lip and sideburn hair, and growth spurt and speeded up bone maturation. In addition, it increases oiliness of skin, hair, and therefore resulting in outbreaks of acne.

Excess testosterone is what makes teenagers break out during adolescence. That is usually when the body starts manufacturing testosterone to stimulate oil production keeping your skin soft and supple. If the testosterone causes too much oil production, it can cause the sebaceous glands to make too much sebum. The same sebum that keeps your skin soft and supple can

also clog pores and cause acne.

Not only does testosterone rear its ugly head in the formation of acne in teens, it can also appear later in life especially in women. For women in menopause and perimenopause, their shifting of hormones can cause thin, dry skin from too little testosterone and too much that clogs the pores and causes adult acne. Hormone testing can take the guesswork out of prescribing hormone replacement therapy. It can find out exactly how much you need of both estrogen and testosterone.

The Scoop on Acne in Senior Citizens

Acne is not just a kid's problem. About 25% of all adult males and up to 50% of adult females will have a problem with acne at some time in their adult lives. In fact, no one will escape having a pimple every now and then -- even people in their senior years.

While there is no one authoritative answer on the causes of adult acne, there are some things that are known for sure:

Every hair on our bodies is anchored in a hair follicle and each hair follicle has a sebaceous gland attached to it.

Each one of these sebaceous glands produces an oily substance known as sebum. The sebum protects your skin and makes your hair shiny.

Some people's bodies produce lots of sebum -- this results in oily skin.

The oilier your skin is, the better chance you have of getting blackheads, whiteheads or pimples, and acne. This happens because hair follicles occasionally become plugged up with the sebum and with dead skin cells. In fact, every minute of the day, though you can't see it happening, skin creates about 30,000 new skin cells. In addition, skin sheds about 30,000 of the old, dead skin cells. There are always lots of dead skin cells to contribute to the process.

Since everyone of every age has hair follicles, sebaceous glands and dead skin cells everyone of every age can, at least theoretically, get acne.

There are some things, however, that are known to contribute to acne in adults of all ages:

Medication. There are some medications that are known to, at least in some people, cause acne. Acne is one of the principal side effects of the 'anti-aging' drug known as DHEA. Some other drugs that have acne as an undesired effect are: anabolic steroids, some anti-epileptic medications, the anti-tuberculosis drugs isoniazid and rifampin and also lithium and iodine-containing medications.

Chafing. A form of acne known as "acne mechanica" can arise from a repeated pressure on a particular area of your body. For example, wearing a heavy back pack every day, wearing a safety helmet or a tight cap or playing an instrument such as a violin or cello will all put a

repeated pressure on some area of your body and that area may develop an outbreak of acne.

Chemical exposure. An overexposure to certain chemicals can cause an acne condition known as chloracne to appear as an outbreak of blackheads, cysts, and pustules, most commonly on the cheeks, behind the ears, in the armpits and in the groin region. The chemicals known to cause this are forms of chlorinated dioxins (such as those used to produce herbicides) and dibenzofurans.

Metabolic conditions. We know that adolescent acne is caused by hormonal imbalances during puberty and have found that hormonal imbalances at any age will create the same condition -- hormone imbalances such as those brought about by pregnancy and menstruation or hormonal abnormalities for any reason, such as an adverse effect of a medication, can induce acne.

Treatment: If you suspect you have adult acne you should make an appointment to see your doctor or get a referral to a dermatologist, if only to determine that it really is acne and not some skin condition that only resembles acne.

Aside from following your doctor's advice and using whatever medication your doctor recommends by following the directions for its use, there is one other thing you can do to help cure acne. Be careful and gentle with your skin. Irritation of the skin can make acne worse and should be avoided. Don't pick at acne or scratch at it with your fingernails (or anything else). When bathing, do not use a rough or abrasive washcloth or a stiff brush. These things will irritate your skin and cause even more damage to your hair follicles.

Speaking of damaged hair follicles, there is one particular condition that looks very much like acne but is not acne. This condition is called folliculitis. Folliculitis occurs when hair follicles (usually damaged hair follicles) become infected and inflamed due to contact with an external bacteria. A mild case of folliculitis will usually go away by itself after a few weeks but if it is really bothersome (itchy) or looks very irritated, it is best to consult your doctor for treatment.

Babies Get Acne Too

To the dismay of their parents, many newborn babies often experience skin breakouts that are alarmingly similar to acne. These bumps are in fact often referred to as 'baby acne.' But what are these unsightly bumps that usually manifest themselves as white bumps? Fortunately, baby acne is usually nothing to worry about. The condition is quite common and usually clears up on its own. But what causes baby acne? And when do you know when it's time to seek professional help?

Baby acne can be traced to the many hormones that pass through the placenta right before the birth of an infant. Many babies are born with baby acne, but still others develop the condition days or weeks after birth. The occurrence of baby acne can basically be attributed to the hormones that are passed from mother to child. When a child is in the womb, they are exposed to varying hormonal changes and fluctuations. When a baby receives a surge of these hormones, and the right conditions are in place, a baby will likely develop baby acne. What are

the right conditions? The infants whose hair follicles are naturally well oiled are more vulnerable to experiencing baby acne.

How do you know if your baby is suffering from baby acne? In general, baby acne manifests itself as small whiteheads that appear on the chin, forehead, and sometimes the child's back. The whiteheads usually are accompanied by a reddening of the skin. The red, inflamed skin and whiteheads may become exacerbated or more pronounced when your child becomes fussy, irritated, hot, or when spit-up or saliva remains on the affected area. Sometimes, strong dyes or perfumes on the baby's clothing or blankets may also promote a breakout.

How long can you expect baby acne to last? In general, most cases of baby acne will gradually recede without treatment. Most of the time, baby acne will diminish after a few weeks. Reoccurrence is common after a few months.

Many times, infants develop other skin irritations that are easily confused with baby acne. Other similar conditions include milia, eczema, or cradle cap. Milia are most commonly confused with baby acne. Milia are tiny white bumps that appear on a child at birth, and which usually diminish quickly, usually two weeks after birth. Eczema and cradle cap usually manifest themselves as red, rash-like breakouts. These conditions cause the skin to appear more scaly rather than pimples.

What can you do if your baby gets baby acne? Usually, no aggressive treatment is necessary, as the condition tends to diminish on its own after a few weeks. To soothe your baby, use very mild, gentle soap to cleanse your child's face once a day with lukewarm water. The use of lotions and oils are not recommended, as these may only aggravate the condition. Avoid excessive cleansing, scrubbing, or use of moisturizers.

Baby acne is almost never caused by dirt or debris; so excessive cleansing will usually not help. Also, strive to wash your baby's blankets and clothing in very mild detergent that is free of harsh perfumes or dyes. You may also want to avoid wearing strong or heavily scented lotions or perfumes around your baby. Keep your baby away from secondhand smoke and other environmental pollutants, as these may only further exacerbate their condition. Be patient, knowing that the condition will gradually diminish with time.

If you notice the condition worsening, or if it does not disappear after six months, visit your pediatrician. Your pediatrician may prescribe a mild topical agent that can help calm your child's skin. In most cases, your pediatrician will try to rule out other potential conditions by taking a medical history of the child's immediate family. In rare cases, baby acne may be indicative of the very early production of sex hormones. The early production of sex hormones may require continual medical attention, as early production of sex hormonal may signal developmental abnormalities.

Another possible cause of baby acne is that the child may be experiencing a reaction to a certain medication. Parents should work with their pediatricians to isolate any possible reactions to medication. Usually, after use of the medication has been discontinued, a child's baby acne should quickly clear up.

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