
The Truth About Acne

There are so many misconceptions about what exactly causes acne and why certain people suffer from it while others live a blemish-free life, never having to experience the pain from excessive acne.

With these myths and ridiculous notions comes another set of problems. People suffering from acne are so desperate to eliminate it, that they try all sorts of different approaches, from modifying their diet, to over-tanning believing that it will minimize acne permanently.

These methods can end up being detrimental to your attempts at controlling your acne, and in many cases can actually intensify your acne and cause it to get worse. In some cases, these 'instant cure remedies' can end up causing permanent scarring.

So, what is acne really all about?

For starters, regardless of what you've heard, acne is not life threatening and no one has ever died from acne itself. By clinical terms, acne is described as being caused by a hormonal imbalance, clinically coined as 'chronic inflammation', or 'systemic inflammation'.

With chronic inflammation, the primary culprit is poor digestion, accompanied by a poor diet.

Another primary cause of acne is when pores on your body become clogged, typically your face, neck, upper body, back and even chest.

When it comes to the different types of acne, there are five individual categories based on the severity and skin damage caused by acne, including:

Comedos

Papule

Pustule

Nodule

Cyst

Symptoms of acne such as blackheads and whiteheads belong to the comedos category, with cysts being classified as belonging to the nodule category.

Another word for acne is “Acne Vulgaris”, a form of acne, which commonly occurs during puberty.

It primarily affects the back, face and chest. Acne vulgaris affect both teenage boys and girls. Nearly 30-40% of teenage boys are affected between the ages of 18 and 19 years old. Girls are generally affected between the ages of 16-18 years.

Here is how acne is characterized by certain groups that can determine the severity of your acne:

Black Heads

You will suffer from black heads when your pores are partially blocked which allows some the bacteria, dead skin cells and sebum to escape and drain to the surface of your skin.

The dark color that comes with black heads is not dirt and so consistently washing your face will not prevent black heads from appearing. Black heads are firmer and

often take a few days to a week to clear.

White Heads

You will see white heads appear when a pore is completely blocked, the opposite of a black head.

With white heads, they tend to last for only a short length of time and result from sebum, bacteria and dead skin cells being trapped beneath the skins surface.

Papules

These are painful, red bumps that are inflamed and contain no head.

Pustules

A pustule is what we commonly call a “pimple”. They are very similar to a white head but are always inflamed and contain a white or yellow center.

Nodules

Nodules are larger spots that can lasts for months and be difficult to deal with because of how painful they can be. Nodules are hardened bumps beneath the skins surface and with nodules, scarring is quite common.

If you believe that you have nodules, please do not squeeze them as doing so may cause severe trauma to your skin, spreading of nodules, and prolonged life.

Don't try to treat nodules on your own, instead book an appointment with your dermatologist for assistance as nodules are quite difficult to control with over the counter medications or home based remedies.

Cysts

Just like a nodule, cysts can be large and feel hard, in fact, some cysts feel like round balls within the skin.

They are also very painful and are filled with liquid. **Do not squeeze or attempt to break a cyst**, as you can push the bacteria and infection deeper into your skin.

Apart from the common forms of acne that many of us have experienced from time to time throughout our life, there are four types of acne that are considered more severe and should be treated by a doctor.

Acne Conglobata

This is the most severe form of acne, generally characterized by the large appearance of numerous nodules, often connected, interconnected and contains a large number of black heads. Because these lesions can become ulcerated, they can cause disfiguring and severe scarring on the skin surface.

Conglobata is usually found on the face, back, chest, upper arms and thighs.

Acne Conglobata usually affects people between the ages of 18 and 30 and is more common in males.

It should also be noted that Acne Conglobata could stay active for many years, lying dormant until something occurs that causes the acne to resurface. The cause of Acne Conglobata is unknown at this time.

Acne Fulminans

This type of severe acne is actually an abrupt onset of acne conglobata that typically afflicts young men.