

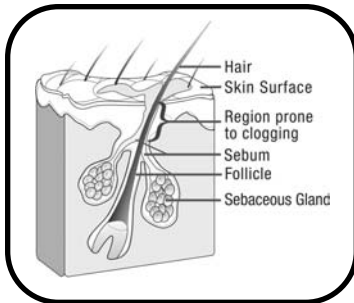
LOOKING Good

Acne 101

What is Acne?

Acne is the most common skin condition, with over 85% of teens--and many adults, as well--experiencing breakouts at least occasionally. Acne is linked to the sebaceous glands, which produce sebum (or oil). These glands are attached to hair follicles (see diagram below). Acne occurs when excess sebum, skin cells from a hair follicle's lining and skin proteins clump together, plugging the opening of a follicle so sebum cannot reach the surface of the skin.

Plugged follicles can take the form of either **whiteheads**, where the plugged follicle remains beneath the skin's surface, or **blackheads**, where the plug in the follicle extends to the skin's surface and becomes visible.



Once a follicle becomes plugged, it creates an ideal environment for a common sebum-eating skin bacterium, *Propionibacterium acnes* (or just *P. Acnes*), to multiply. This bacterium produces enzymes and chemicals that irritate and inflame the skin around a clogged follicle. **Pimples, breakouts, or zits** are common names for the lesions that result from this type of skin irritation and inflammation, though doctors have more precise ways of classifying acne lesions. For most people, acne is a generally mild condition. Of course, a pimple at the wrong time is never desirable, but in truth, there are far more concerning issues than acne. For some people, however, severe cases can result in permanent scarring if left untreated.

What Causes Acne?

The precise cause of acne is not known, but its onset is usually linked to a few key factors. One of the most important of these factors seems to be the increase in the production of androgen hormones that occurs in both men and women during puberty or adolescence. Increased amounts of androgens in the body cause the sebaceous glands to become enlarged and to produce greater quantities of sebum (oil).

Other factors that are thought to contribute to acne include:

- use of oil-based, pore-clogging cosmetics (look for non-comedogenic products).
- a family history of acne.
- abrasion caused by over-vigorous scrubbing or frequent shaving.
- exposure to high heat and humidity.
- the use of certain drugs, such as glucocorticoids, iodides, bromides, lithium, artificial androgens and others.

Treatment & Prevention

- **At the surface...**Since acne develops in clogged pores, use a keratolytic ingredient like Salicylic Acid to unclog pores.
- **Deep down...**Use an antibacterial ingredient like Benzoyl Peroxide to eliminate the *P. Acnes* inside the pore.
- **Treat your skin everyday...**Dermatologists agree that regular, consistent use is the key to a clear complexion.

Since normal changes in the body during puberty are the main contributors to acne, it's no wonder virtually everyone experiences breakouts. Remember, your friends experience it, your parents probably experienced it, and it's not a sign of personal failure when you experience it. Yes, even models and movie stars experience breakouts...of course, they have a lot of help hiding them!