

pimples, zits and underground eruptions

If you're a teen, chances are pretty good that you have some acne. For most people, acne goes away almost completely by the time they are finished being teenagers. But knowing that doesn't always make it easier when you're standing in front of the mirror looking at a big pimple on your face. Learning about acne and how to treat it can help you feel better about your face.

Take the quiz below to test your acne IQ. The facts might surprise you!

1. Acne is common among teens because of the hormones that come with puberty.
True False
2. Acne comes from dirt on your face.
True False



3. Foods like leafy green vegetables, skim milk and whole grain breads are good for your acne.
True False
4. If a friend is using a prescription drug for acne, and it helps her, it's OK to try it on yourself.
True False
5. There's no cure for acne.
True False

ANSWERS:

1. **True:** As your body begins to mature and develop, hormones stimulate the glands to make oil. When there is too much oil, it clogs the pores and leads to acne.
2. **False:** Acne is a condition of the pores on the face, neck, chest, back, shoulders and even the uppers arms. When acne looks like little white bumps (whiteheads), it is dead skin clogging the pores. Blackheads are pore oils that turn black when exposed to the air. You are left with a pimple if the pore opens and lets oil, bacteria, and dead skin cells make their way under the skin.
3. **False:** Foods like leafy green vegetables, skim milk and whole grain breads are good for your body but they won't clear up your acne. Eating foods like French fries, pizza, chocolate or sodas doesn't cause acne either.

One thing is certain: a strict diet by itself will not clear your skin. On the other hand, some people find that certain foods seem to make their acne worse. If that's the case, avoid foods that clearly worsen your acne. The only real cause of acne is overactive oil glands in the skin—and that's it.

4. **False:** Never use someone else's prescription. There can be dangerous side effects and it may not help your type of acne. Different kinds of skin require different kinds of care.
5. **True:** There are hundreds of advertised acne fighting creams, soaps and lotions that promise miracles. Many of these miracle cures don't deliver what they promise. Just remember that even though there is no cure for acne, there is still a lot that you can do to help manage it.

what to do about your acne

Try products containing salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide. But, if you get irritated skin, stop using it. There are many lotions and creams available at the drugstore. Follow the instructions exactly—if you use more than you're supposed to, your skin may get too dried out, and feel and look worse.

Wash your face twice a day with a mild soap and warm water to help prevent the oily build-up that can contribute to acne. Rinse thoroughly using your hands. Vigorous washing and scrubbing your face will actually make your acne worse by irritating the skin.

Don't pick, scratch, pop or squeeze your pimples because more redness, swelling, inflammation, and scarring may result. If you can't keep your hands off your acne, use warm water on a clean wash cloth three times a day until the pimple opens and drains.

If you wear makeup, make sure it's labeled "oil-free," "non-comedogenic," or "non-acnegenic." This means it won't clog your pores and contribute to acne. Shield your face when applying hairspray and gels because they can also clog your pores and cause a type of acne. If you have long hair, try to keep it from touching your face.

See your doctor if you can't manage your acne with home treatment, or if your acne takes longer than a month to heal, keeps draining, or begins to scar. Your doctor might prescribe a stronger lotion or cream to put on your skin, or pills that you can take to kill acne bacteria.

If you are a guy whose skin becomes irritated by shaving, try using a shaving gel instead of a cream, use a double-edged razor instead of an electric shaver, shave in the shower where the steam helps to soften your skin, shave only in the direction your hair grows, and don't try to shave too close. Shave as lightly as possible.

Sometimes even with washing, lotions and oil-free makeup, teens get acne anyway—and it's still totally normal. Most important, remember that you're not the only one with acne. Looking around at your friends should help you see that most teenagers are in it together!

