



Women with *acne cosmetica* may present with small bumps on their cheeks, chin and forehead. **Acne on the cheeks may also be linked to exposure to a dirty phone, pillowcase or other habits such as frequently touch their face.**



OTHER PARTS OF BODY

Acne on the chest and back in athletes or other active patients that do not properly clean their workout clothes and gear properly or do not shower immediately after exercising.



Moisturizing or oil-based hair care products can **clog the pores** and cause *pomade acne*.



Acne on the nose or the T-zone in general may be linked to excess oil production.



Acne around the mouth and along the jawline is commonly seen in adult female acne, which is at least somewhat hormonally-driven. These patients may have **excess male hormones (androgens) in the skin.**

FOREHEAD

Linked to hair care products.

CHEEKS

Caused by cosmetic products.

NOSE

CHIN/AROUND MOUTH

Linked to hormonal acne.

Acne - a skin condition

ACNE is a common skin condition which is an eyesore, that is, in the eyes of the beholder. Our skin surface has pores (holes).

When this pores clogs up with dead skin cells, excessive sebum (natural skin oil) with or without bacteria in them, or ingrown hairs, acne results.

The negative impact it has can be any of the following:

1. Mental health - low self-esteem, anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts even.
2. Financially - expenses for medical consult and medical products for skin health.
3. Physical health - skin becoming painful, discoloured, infected and scarred.
4. Socially - self isolation, reduced popularity, negative impact on relationships.

Acne occurs in any age, mostly teenagers and adults, even babies, and in any gender or ethnicity. It can run in families due to genes.

In women, it is noticeable during menstruation, pregnancy and in a condition called polycystic ovary syndrome - a common condition that can cause acne, weight gain and the formation of small cysts inside the ovary.

Other associated causes of acne are: Medications like steroids, anti-epileptics and lithium used for depression.

Common appearance of acne is on face which prompts people to seek attention for it, be it traditional or scientific effort. Acne can also appear on the back, chest, neck, shoulders, upper arms and buttocks. Acne signs and symptoms vary depending on the severity of your condition:

- Whiteheads (closed plugged pores);
- Blackheads (open plugged pores);
- Small red, tender bumps (papules);
- Pimples (pustules), which are papules with pus at their tips;
- Large, solid, painful lumps beneath the surface of the skin (nodules); and
- Painful, pus-filled lumps beneath the surface of the skin (cystic lesions)

Management of Acne

Firstly people may try no treatment ex-

cept personal hygiene and skin care and wait for acne to disappear.

They may choose healthier diet. They may use herbal or traditional means.

This may work with mild acne. Ideally one should see a dermatologist (skin specialist) for advice especially if whatever you have tried at home or at spa has not proven to be helpful.

In Fiji, there are public and private skin clinics available. For example, PJ Twomey Hospital is a public health facility with both TB and skin outpatient clinics available.

Other than that we may rely on outreach skin clinic visits or going to private doctors in Fiji.

This is helpful for persistent or severe acne, infection and scarring included.

Doctors may prescribe stronger creams, lotions, or wash solutions or antibiotics and review accordingly.

Procedures that dermatologist uses to treat acne:

□ Lasers and other light therapies: These devices reduce the P. acnes bacteria. Your dermatologist can determine whether this type of treatment can be helpful;

□ Chemical peels: You cannot buy the chemical peels that dermatologists use. Dermatologists use chemical peels to treat two types of acne—blackheads and papules; and

□ Acne removal: Your dermatologist may perform a procedure called “drainage and extraction” to remove a large acne cyst. This procedure helps when the cyst does not respond to medicine. It also helps ease the pain and the chance that the cyst will leave a scar. If you absolutely have to get rid of a cyst quickly, your dermatologist may inject the cyst with medicine.

Advice to heed

1. Wash twice a day and after sweating.

Regular exercise cannot improve your acne, but it can boost your mood and improve your self-esteem. Shower as soon as possible once you finish exercising as sweat can irritate your acne;

2. Use your fingertips to apply a gentle, non-abrasive cleanser. Using a washcloth, mesh sponge, or anything else can irritate the skin;

3. Be gentle with your skin. Use gentle products, such as those that are alcohol-free. Do not use products that irritate your skin, which may include astringents, toners and exfoliants. Dry, red skin makes acne appear worse. Make-up. Not too much. Use water-based products that are described as non-comedogenic which is less likely to block the pores in your skin. Completely remove make-up before going to bed;

4. Scrubbing your skin can make acne worse. Avoid the temptation to scrub your skin;

5. Rinse with lukewarm water;

6. Shampoo regularly. If you have oily hair, shampoo daily and avoid letting your hair fall across your face;

7. Let your skin heal naturally. If you pick, pop or squeeze your acne, your skin will take longer to clear and you increase the risk of getting acne scars;

8. Keep your hands off your face. Touching your skin throughout the day can cause flare-ups;

9. Stay out of the sun and tanning beds. Tanning damages you skin. In addition, some acne medications make the skin very sensitive to ultraviolet (UV) light, which you get from both the sun and indoor tanning devices. Using tanning beds increases your risk for melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, by 75 per cent; and

10. Consult a dermatologist.



Food advice

Diet with high glycaemic carbohydrates, dairy, trans fat has been associated with development of acne.

Low-glycaemic foods made of complex carbohydrates may reduce your risk of developing acne such as whole grains, legumes, unprocessed fruits and vegetables.

Foods containing mineral zinc, vitamin A, E and antioxidants are thought to be beneficial for the skin because they reduce inflammation: Some skin-friendly food choices include:

- Yellow and orange fruits and vegetables such as carrots, apricots, and sweet potatoes;
- spinach and other dark green and leafy vegetables;
- tomatoes;
- blueberries;
- whole-wheat bread;
- brown rice;
- quinoa;
- turkey, salmon, mackerel, and other kinds of fatty fish; and
- pumpkin seeds, beans, peas, and lentils, nuts.

Keynote

Acne is a common, preventable and treatable skin condition.

We must have patience during treatment phase as some may take up to weeks to months.

Others may be fortunate as it may be only few days of treatment.

We are all humans with flaws and must love ourselves for positive mental well-being.

Our friends, family and social support is also crucial for those suffering from any health condition to have a better outcome in overall wellness.

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