

## Acne and Blemishes

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Acne and blemishes affect a person's quality of life more than we like to admit. Parents hope and pray that their teens won't be plagued by these problems, adolescents who have problem skin can't help being stressed about it, and the scars from difficult cases can last a lifetime.

So what can be done about acne and blemishes? Blemishes may be a upsetting for a young lass on the morning of her prom when she wakes up with a zit on her otherwise perfect face. But these can be treated topically with ease and covered up before she slips on her stunning gown. Most of the products sold over the counter in drug stores work better in clearing up blemishes than with more severe forms of acne. (Americans spend well of \$100 million on over-the-counter acne treatments each year.) It's really the heavy-duty acne that causes the heartbreak. Acne includes pimples, blocked pores (blackheads and whiteheads) and cysts and nodules that are deeper in the skin. While it occurs mostly in teenagers, adults can be plagued by it too, even into their 40s. Interestingly, young men tend to have more severe cases of acne than do young women, but it's the women who seek help from the dermatologist for acne medication to clear things up. Often for females the acne is hormonally related. Sometimes just taking birth control pills can help clear it up. Of course, the long term effects of taking birth control pills are really unknown, so it's a good idea to check think carefully about the possible side effects before you use birth control to clear up acne and blemishes. Some people think that acne and blemishes are caused by poor hygiene, but this is not the case. And often, washing more frequently just exacerbates the problem, causing your oil producing glands to work harder, producing even more oil than your skin can handle. Also, if you wash too vigorously, thinking this will help, it will do the opposite. It will irritate your skin, compounding the problem. Some people say that acne is caused by diet. Mainstream medicine says this is hogwash for the most part. But M.D.s, dermatologists included, have minimal training in nutrition for maintaining health. They're trained in treating disease. People who have studied alternative healing modalities say that diet can be a big factor in whether you get blemishes and acne, and it can be a big factor in clearing up the skin. The link between diet and skin problems is something that will be further explored as time goes on, and more information is likely to be available on just how much out diet plays a role in our skin's health.