

# ACNE

## AN OVERVIEW

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### IMPORTANT

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### Introduction

Acne is a breakout of pimples. It usually occurs in or near the oil glands on the face, neck, shoulders, and upper back. Its cause is not known but involves bacteria that bother the skin. Treatment includes antibiotics, topical vitamin A, benzyl benzoate, and dermabrasion.

### Acne Vulgaris

Acne Vulgaris is an inflammatory disease of the sebaceous glands and hair follicles characterized by comedones, papules, pustules, nodules, and pus-filled cysts on or under the skin on the face, neck, chest, or upper back.



### Causes and Incidence

The aetiology is unknown, although genetics, hormonal dysfunction, and over-secretion of sebum are strongly implicated. Predisposing factors include cosmetics, stress, steroids and other drugs, oral contraceptives, mechanical skin irritants, and climate. Acne usually begins in puberty and affects about 80% of adolescents in some form. Males are affected more often; however, females have more severe and more prolonged cases.

## Disease Process

Androgenic activity increases oil production and the size of the sebaceous glands. Intrafollicular hyperkeratosis occurs, and the hair follicles in the sebaceous gland are blocked as comedones (blackheads and whiteheads) consisting of sebum, keratin, and micro-organisms are formed. As these comedones enlarge, they become visible and palpable on the skin's surface, often forming cysts. The enlarged follicle eventually ruptures and the contents are released into the dermis, setting up an inflammatory reaction and forming abscesses. Chronic and recurring lesions form distinctive acne scars.

## Symptoms

Typical presenting signs of superficial acne include comedones and pustules. Deep acne is characterized by inflamed nodules, pus-filled cysts, abscesses, and sometimes scarring.

## Potential Complications

Permanent scarring is the most common complication.

## Diagnostic Tests

Diagnosis is by physical examination.

## Treatments

Treatment varies, depending on the severity of the acne. Mild cases are often self-treated with over-the-counter preparations.

**Surgery** - Excision of large cysts and abscesses; cryosurgery to freeze cysts and nodules; dermabrasion for scarring

**Drugs** - Topical antimicrobial and anti-infective drugs, as well as comedolytics, for pustules; oral anti-infective drugs to reduce and prevent pustules; isotretinoin if antibiotics are unsuccessful; oral estrogen/progesterone for unresponsive, menses-related acne

**General** - Extraction of comedones; instruction not to pick or squeeze comedones or pustules; emotional support to boost self-esteem

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## Acne Conglobata

The causes of Acne Conglobata are still unknown. However, most health practitioners are of opinion that it is related to the genetics. Chromosomal defects are responsible for this acne. Most patients inherit it from their parents.

Certain elements are known to trigger this acne. Toxic gases like halogens and dioxins and anabolic steroids



can cause severe acne in some people. Discontinuing a course of testosterone may also trigger it.

### **Symptoms of Acne Conglobata**

Swelling and pain in the lesions with severe inflammation and sensitivity are the common symptoms of this acne. The cysts may erupt and the lesions ooze out also.

### **Treatment of Acne Conglobata**

Treatment of Acne Conglobata primarily involves oral medication in the form of isotretinoin. It is derived from vitamin A. It prevents sebaceous glands from secreting sebum which checks growth of new blemishes. Depending on the severity, doctors often prescribe corticosteroid for applying on the affected area and antibiotics for consumption. Antibiotics abate the bacteria which causes Acne Conglobata and the topical medicine reduces the inflammation thereby providing relief to the patient. The most widely used antibiotics are tetracycline and erythromycin.

Acne Conglobata needs time to heal. Antibiotics are usually prescribed at the beginning of the treatment and isotretinoin takes almost five months to show any result.

### **Possible side effects of isotretinoin for acne conglobata treatment**

Although isotretinoin is widely used in treating Acne Conglobata but it has several harmful side effects. It can cause depression and patients may develop suicidal thoughts also. Whereas antibiotics often cause diarrhea and corticosteroid makes skin thin and allergic too. Several researches have shown another fatal side effect of isotretinoin. It causes miscarriages and birth defects when taken by pregnant women. So women should avoid it during pregnancy and must use birth control while taking this medicine.

### **Alternate treatments of acne conglobata**

Tretinoin is another drug that is administered to eliminate lesions of acne conglobata. The patient may have to visit the dermatologist from time to time to check for any recurrence.

Another alternate therapy is using carbon dioxide laser followed by applying topical Tretinoin.

For resistant cases often a leprosy drug, Dapsone is used. But this drug requires monitoring.

### **Surgery for acne conglobata**

Surgery is the last option in *treating Acne Conglobata*. The connected nodules are eliminated through surgery. Sometimes Intralesional triamcinolone or cryotherapy is also performed to treat this acne. After surgery often patients undergo grafting to have a healthy skin.

### **Remedies for acne conglobata**

- To fight Acne Conglobata patients need a strong immunity system. Supplements of vitamins A, E, C and B6 and Zinc are often prescribed to boost up the immunity system to fight against the bacteria.
- Your diet should consist of healthy foods which boost immunity system. Include fruits and organic food in your diet.
- Exercise improves blood circulation which makes skin healthy and reduces the chances of acne conglobata.
- It may not be possible to prevent Acne Conglobata but as a remedial measure people who have history of it in their family or who suffer from recurrent acne problems should keep their skin clean by taking regular baths. They may use topical medicines also to reduce spread of acne.

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