



SKIN INSTITUTE

Acne General Information for Patients

What is Acne? Acne is a very common skin condition characterised by *comedones* (blackheads and whiteheads), *papules* (red spots) and *pustules* (pus-filled spots). It usually starts at puberty and varies in severity from a few spots on the face, back and chest which most adolescents will have at some time; to a more serious problem that may be embarrassing, impair self-confidence and cause scarring. For the majority of people acne tends to resolve by the late teens or early twenties but it can persist for longer in some. Acne can also develop for the first time in people in their late twenties and beyond.

What causes acne?

- **Increased sebum production**
Individuals with acne tend to produce more sebum (grease) on their skin. This leads to clogging of follicles and allows *P. acnes* (bacteria) to inflame the skin causing acne.
- **Abnormal shedding of skin cells**
Skin cells surrounding hair follicles do not mature correctly and fail to shed when they should. This leads to a clogging of hair follicles.
- ***P. acnes***
The acne bacterium (*Propionibacterium Acnes*) lives on everyone's skin, usually causing no problems. However for those prone to acne the build up of oil creates an ideal environment in which these bacteria can multiply. This triggers inflammation and the formation of red or pus-filled spots.
- **Inflammation**
The combination of increased sebum production, abnormal shedding of skin cells and increased *P. acnes* leads to inflammatory papules and pustules.

Why do I have Acne? It is unclear why some individuals are prone to acne. Acne can run in families suggesting genetic factors may be involved. Hormone levels are usually normal in patients with acne though follicles may be more sensitive to androgenic hormones. Some women flare around their menstrual period because of this. Other factors that can worsen acne include high humidity environments, cosmetics, heavy moisturisers, physical irritation such as from harsh soaps and scrubs, and occlusion from clothing such as from hats. Dietary factors are not believed to be important in causing acne.

What treatment options are offered at the Skin Institute? At the Skin Institute we offer a range of treatment options. Acne can be successfully treated and one of our Cosmetic Nurses will discuss with you the range of options available in our acne programme. We pride ourselves on offering the latest and most effective evidence-based acne treatments available. We provide a comprehensive regime suited to your skin type and level of acne. Treatments include:

- Topical treatments (e.g. benzoyl peroxide, retinoids, antibiotics, Niacinamide, alpha/beta hydroxy acids)
- Oral treatments (e.g. antibiotics, Oratane, the contraceptive pill)
- Comedone extraction
- Microdermabrasion
- Chemical peels
- Intense pulsed light
- Photodynamic therapy
- Scar treatments (e.g. laser resurfacing, excision, fat transfer, dermal fillers, Intense pulsed light, deep chemical peels, dermabrasion)