

Debunking Acne Myths

By Kateri DeLaney, R.N.

The prospect of heading back to school should be an exciting time for most kids. But for adolescents and teens with acne, the thought may be painful, with fears of embarrassment and teasing.

Parents want to help their kids to deal with – and overcome – this problem. But frequently, outdated myths about acne prevent parents from getting their kids treatments that can really work!

P. acnes is the bacteria involved in the process of acne. This is normal bacteria on the skin, and performs an important function; it breaks down the secretions of our sweat and sebaceous glands. But, when the bacteria get trapped in a plugged pore, it can overgrow and erupt into pimples.

Hormones also play a role in breakouts – nearly all girls and/or women will get hormone-influenced blemishes at some time in their lives.

There are many myths about how to treat and control acne – and some of them can actually cause more harm than good! Let's take a look at the most common ones:

1. **Eating certain foods, such as chocolate and greasy French fries and pizza,** causes breakouts. While a poor diet is not good for your overall health, these foods do not directly cause break-outs.
2. **You can “catch” acne** from using other people's make-up or make-up brushes. It's never a good idea to share personal care items, and doing so may transmit other microbes. But you can't catch acne from someone.
3. **Wearing make-up causes breakouts.** If you choose nonacnegenic or noncomedogenic cosmetics, they shouldn't cause breakouts. Some concealers contain benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid, which actually help fight acne.
4. **Tanning or being exposed to certain waves of light** helps clear breakouts. The damage done by ultraviolet rays damages the skin more than it helps it. Any light treatments should be administered by a physician.
5. **Popping pimples makes them go away.** Tempting as it is, avoid picking at your face when you have breakouts. Instead of making them go away, you can actually aggravate the situation. Deep acne can overwhelm the ability of the skin's dermis to heal itself and can cause uneven pigmentation and scarring.
6. **Frequent washing can cut down on breakouts.** Washing too frequently can lead to dryness and irritation, which will aggravate the situation. Also avoid scrubbing your face, which can irritate your skin. Wash your face twice a day to remove dirt and oil – preferably with a cleanser specifically designed for acne.

7. **Using rubbing alcohol is helpful.** Rubbing alcohol can dry out the skin and potentially stimulate glands to compensate by over-producing sebum. Again, it's best to use a product specifically designed for acne.
8. **Acne is just a cosmetic disease that has to run its course.** False! Acne can result in permanent scars and it can negatively influence how adolescents and young adults feel about themselves.

There are very effective products and options available for treating acne available today.

Over-the-counter products usually contain salicylic acid, which helps dissolve the oil that binds dead skin cells together to clog pores. Benzoyl peroxide is another ingredient that keeps the P. acne bacteria under control.

There are also physician-prescribed products like Obagi CLENZIderm M.D.™ This prescription-strength acne therapeutic system contains liquefied 5% benzoyl peroxide and salicylic acid, which are clinically proven to treat the three main causes of acne described above: excess sebum, skin cell buildup and P. acnes bacteria.

Most benzoyl peroxide formulas have insoluble macro-crystals that remain largely on the surface of the skin because they are too big to penetrate its surface. Obagis' product contains micronized benzoyl for greater penetration into the skin.

Another treatment option is Vibraderm™, the new generation of Microdermabrasion. Vibraderm uses a high vibration paddle to gently vibrate away dead skins cells, which decreases the possibility of clogged pores.

Talk with your physician about which treatment options may be best for your child – and help her or him face the school year with a clearer outlook!

About the author: Kateri DeLaney, R.N., is clinical director for the Sylvana Institute for Medical Aesthetics, LLC in Frederick, MD, 301-668-0002, www.sylvanainstitute.com. Sylvana offers Obagi CLENZIderm M.D. and a variety of skin treatments, including Vibraderm.