



Acne

Patient information leaflet



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Common Ailments Service

Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your or your child's condition.

Acne is a common skin condition that causes spots on the face, chest and back.

Glands in the skin produce an oily substance called sebum which is released into the pores (tiny holes) in the skin. In acne, the glands produce too much sebum and the pores become blocked. Bacteria that are normally harmless and live on the skin may then infect the blocked pores causing spots.



There may be different types of spots, including:

- blackheads – small and either black or yellow in colour
- whiteheads – similar to blackheads, but do not empty when squeezed
- papules – small red bumps that may feel sore
- pustules – small red bumps filled with pus
- nodules – sometimes painful, hard lumps beneath the skin
- cysts – large pus-filled lumps

Although acne is most common in teenagers it can affect people of any age.



Treatment and Prevention

Medicines that can help

These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for you or your child.

Your pharmacist may recommend a gel called **Duac®** which contains **benzoyl peroxide** and an antibiotic called **clindamycin**. These help to reduce the number of bacteria (germs) on your skin. Duac® is used to treat mild to moderate acne.

If Duac® is not suitable for you, your pharmacist may suggest other gels that are only available from your GP, or a gel that only contains **benzoyl peroxide**.

Using Duac® or benzoyl peroxide gel

When you first start using the gel, it may make your skin:

- itch
- burn
- peel
- look red

If this happens, use it less often and gradually build up. For example, apply the gel 3 times a week and gradually increase if it is not irritating your skin until you are using it every day.



Treatment and Prevention

Using Duac® or benzoyl peroxide gel

The gel may make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. Avoid too much sun exposure, and apply oil-free sunscreen with SPF 30 or above. The gel may also cause bleaching so try not to get it on your hair or clothes.

Keep using the gel because it takes up to 6 weeks to have an effect. After about 3 months of treatment with the gel, make an appointment with your doctor to discuss whether you need to continue with the treatment. They may discuss other treatments with you if your acne has not completely gone.

Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.

If you are concerned about any side effects from a treatment, report it to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also report side effects on the Yellow Card [app](#) or [website](#).

Skin care

Acne is not caused by poor hygiene or diet. You cannot pass acne on to other people.

To help improve your acne:

- keep your hair clean and off your face
- shower soon after exercising, as sweat can irritate acne
- use water-based moisturisers and cosmetics, not oil-based
- avoid picking or squeezing spots as this can cause scarring
- avoid using a lot of make-up or cosmetics and remove it at the end of the day
- avoid washing your face too much



When to Get Help

Contact your GP or call 111 if:

- your acne is making you very sad
- you develop large, hard or pus-filled lumps (nodules or cysts)
- your treatment has not started to work after 6 weeks
- your skin becomes swollen or blistered (stop using the gel)

Call 999 or go to A&E immediately if you have signs of a very rare, but serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to benzoyl peroxide.

Signs include:

- wheezing
- tightness in the chest or throat
- trouble breathing or talking
- swelling in your mouth, face, lips, tongue or throat

If you are worried that your or your child's condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.



More information

For more information on acne or a medicine, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS 111 Wales: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/acne/>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/skin-conditions/acne-leaflet>

Medicines A-Z: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

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