

Helping Your Teens...



...Put Their Best Face Forward

By Heidi K. Anderson, M.D.

Acne often strikes when we are struggling with adolescence and developing a comfort level in our own “skin.” It is hard when that skin is inflamed, tender or scarred. More than 17 million American teens and adults suffer from acne. Personally, my patients have taught me that acne is more than a medical disorder, it takes an emotional toll as well. For many, living with acne has fostered difficulties with self esteem or led to social withdrawal or anxiety.

At the heart of acne is a pore clogged with sebum or oil. Many factors like hormones can increase our production of sebum. Depending upon the depth and intensity of a clogged pore, an acne lesion can be as superficial as a comedone or blackhead or as deep as a cyst. A pore clogged with sebum and retained dead skin cells provides nourishment and a safe haven for bacteria like *Propionibacterium acnes*. As the bacteria thrive or the wall of the pore is penetrated, our skin responds by mounting an immune response enlisting white blood

cells and the skin becomes inflamed. The presentation of acne can vary from non-inflammatory clogged pores to inflammatory pustules and papules or a combination thereof.

The foundation to addressing treatment of acne is a great cleansing tool like the Clarisonic™. This sonic cleanser helps exfoliate, remove oils and increases the penetration of our medications. It is gentle and enjoyable. Now it is reasonable to expect a teenager to wash their face twice a day. The next strategy in selecting treatment is to understand the clinical presentation of the patient’s acne and their lifestyle.

Targets for acne treatment are

1. Reduction of oil production
2. Exfoliation of clogged pores and prevention of retention of dead skin cells
3. Cessation of inflammation
4. Termination of bacteria