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The Aggravation of Acne

Pimples. Blemishes. Zits. Spots. Whatever you call them, they aren't pretty. One day your face is smooth as a peach and the next day you wake up looking like a pepperoni pizza. What happened? Pimples. Zits. The correct term is ACNE VULGARIS (**ak-nee vul-gair-iss**). It's not that acne is vulgar; the word "vulgaris" means *common*. That's the thing. Acne affects more than 85 percent of the teenage population. That's more than three out of four teens who are affected. It's a *common* problem. If you suffer from acne, you're not alone.



FIGURE 81—Acne vulgaris. A. Close-up view of face. B. Showing typical acne of trunk. C. Extensive acne of chest and shoulders.

We all have tiny little pores on our skin that hold a hair and an oil gland. The oil gland is called a SEBACEOUS (**si-bay-shuss**) gland. Normally, these sebaceous glands make SEBUM (**sea-bum**), which helps keep our skin soft. Sometimes the glands produce too much sebum, or oil. Acne happens when these tiny little pores on our skin become clogged. The pore gets filled with bacteria, dirt, and dead skin cells. There is no place to go but out. The skin becomes inflamed. It swells and becomes red. Sometimes it is even painful to touch.

Sometimes, the tip of the pimple is white. Voila! You've got a *whitehead*. Sometimes, the oil clogging your pore mixes with air and turns dark. You have a *blackhead*. Sometimes the pimple can become infected with lots of bacteria. That's when your pimple starts to fill with pus. These kinds of pimples make those mammoth size red lumps in the most noticeable spot. It's no fun having acne, but there are some things you can do to help.

First, clean your skin with a mild soap. Remove makeup and wash your face at least once or twice each day, especially after exercising. (Don't overdo this washing thing, though, or you could get a rash on top of your pimples. Ouch!)

Next, shampoo your hair daily and keep the hair off your face if you can.

"To squeeze or not to squeeze," might be your next question. Tempting as it is, try not to squeeze, scratch, pick, or rub the pimples. It can lead to scarring and skin infections.

Finally, keep your hands away from your face and, if you use makeup, use the water-based kind.

Some people have a particularly tough time getting rid of these nasty zits. If you are having lots of problems, perhaps you might want to consult a DERMATOLOGIST (**der-ma-tol-o-jist**). This is a skin doctor who may want to discuss some stronger medications to help you.

Despite the popular belief that chocolate, nuts, and other foods cause acne, this does not seem to be true.

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Unless you're rubbing it on your face, food is rarely the problem. Hormones are generally the first to blame. There isn't much you can do about this part of it.

Another culprit is stress. Everyone has stress, but too much of it can trigger all kinds of changes in your body. Learning how to deal with stress can help you avoid those awful acne eruptions.

Finally, sweating and high levels of humidity can create clogged pores. Remember them? That's where the whole acne thing got started. Shower after exercising. Wash your face especially at night, and don't pick at your face. Soon those annoying zits will be a memory. Maybe a bad one, but they'll be gone!

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Questions

1. What is the correct term for pimples?

2. What does the word "vulgaris" mean?

3. What are the oil glands in our skin called?

- A. cretaceous glands
- B. herbaceous glands
- C. sebaceous glands
- D. hormonal glands

4. What is a dermatologist?

5. Which of these things does NOT help a pimple?

- A. having clean hair
- B. washing it
- C. squeezing it
- D. hands off your face

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_____ 6. What is considered one cause of acne?

- A. eating eggs
- B. hormone changes
- C. washing daily
- D. showering

