

Acne – no cure, but effective relief possible

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Overview

Acne (or *acne vulgaris*) is a common chronic inflammatory skin disorder. Although not life-threatening, it can be personally distressing, and have a serious impact on the sufferer's quality of life. Acne appears as unsightly pimples (*lesions*) mainly on the face and neck, but sometimes on the chest and upper back. People of all ages and races, both sexes, and even infants, can succumb to it. Even so, it tends to be most common in adolescents, and in most cases, males. An eruption of acne, especially if severe, can impair the sufferer's social life, becoming a source of embarrassment, self-consciousness and loss of self-esteem. As the condition is so common there is no shortage of remedies for it. They range from antibiotics to skin cleansers, from dietary changes to skin abrasives, and from supplements to pimple removers. Tibb regards acne as an acute disorder, brought on by disharmony in the person's underlying hormonal profile. It offers a range of natural treatments, based on better hygiene and lifestyle changes, supplemented with herbal remedies.

Around 75% of people between 11 and 30 will get acne at some stage in their lives.

Signs of acne

The typical signs of an outbreak of acne are:

- (a) *Comedones* appear: small skin nodules, starting as whiteheads, turning into blackheads, around the hair shaft
- (b) *Papules* erupt: raised, inflamed, irritating spots form once the blackhead ruptures
- (c) *Seborrhoea* develops: the sebaceous glands in the hair follicle secrete excess sebum, making the skin greasy
- (d) *Pus* forms: dead skin cells, bacteria and white blood cells gather at the site
- (e) *Skin scarring* and *cysts* will occur if the lesions are picked and squeezed

What causes acne?

According to Tibb, acne is merely the outer sign of an inner disharmony, with several causes. Overactive sebaceous glands produce too much sebum, which provide a fertile terrain for bacterial infection. Also, an imbalance of male sex hormones or environmental toxins (from chemical pollutants, certain foods, or in cosmetics, shampoos or some prescription drugs) may trigger an eruption. The net effect is excessive heat production in the person's skin.

Acne is a common side effect of steroid therapy, testosterone and oral contraceptives

Acne usually occurs around adolescence, when there is greatly increased physical growth, and the body is in a state of continuous disharmony. A great deal of metabolic heat is being generated, with sometimes wild swings in the levels of male hormones (such as *testosterone*). This leads to over-stimulation of oil secretion from the skin's sebaceous glands, which normally lubricate hair and skin. If this excess is not removed promptly, it blocks the gland's exit, leading to a build-up of sebum, then clogged pores, so creating the ideal terrain for an infection to set in.

Acne is the result of skin cells, sebum and hair clumping into a plug, which gets infected with bacteria. This causes a local swelling, which turns into a pimple when the plug starts to break down.

If someone, especially a teenager, pursues a lifestyle which encourages excessive heat production, the chance of developing acne increases. This usually arises from a faulty diet (for example, junk food, deep-fried foods and too much chocolate), and is aggravated by constant worry and stress, and poor sleeping. Leading a passive, sedentary life is also a factor. In addition, the sufferer's temperament comes into the picture: someone with a dominant or even sub-dominant sanguinous (Hot & Moist) or bilious (Hot & Dry) temperament is more likely to succumb to acne. For both these temperamental types, heat is the most important quality. Their type of skin and the secretory structures within, such as sebaceous glands, pre-dispose them to acne.

Acne can be influenced by a hot and humid climate, anxiety, constant stress, greasy hair, some types of makeup, squeezing pimples, and the stage of the menstrual cycle.

Tibb's acne treatment

Tibb takes a two-pronged approach to treating someone with acne:

- (a) Resolving troublesome **signs and symptoms**, so restoring good skin health and appearance. This alleviates social tension and personal emotional pain;
- (b) Dealing with the **underlying causes** of the disorder. This means correcting the disharmony involving the quality of heat which is responsible for the acne eruption.

Note: All Tibb-initiated measures must support Physis, our inner doctor. The person's natural, inborn healing processes must be enhanced, not undermined or bypassed.

Hygienic support

For Tibb, personal hygiene is one of the minor Lifestyle Factors. Even so, it features prominently when treating acne. The advice on hygiene is logical and simple to follow.

- (a) The acne-affected face should be washed (not scrubbed) with warm water regularly, but no more than two to three times daily. A mild soap or special face wash should be used.
- (b) The person's hair should be kept clean with regular washings, and kept away from the face.
- (c) The person should avoid touching the face, and wash hands regularly.
- (d) Bed pillows should be washed regularly with good quality detergent or shampoo.
- (e) Pimples should not be popped aggressively, as this makes scarring inevitable.
- (f) Men should shave carefully with a sharp razor, softening the beard beforehand with soapy warm water.
- (g) Women should not sleep with makeup on, and use only reputable soap or cream.
- (h) If glasses are worn, the frames should be cleaned often, as sebum and dead skin cells build up there.
- (i) Wearing loose clothing helps if acne erupts on the body. Caps and headbands should be avoided.
- (j) Avoid too much sun exposure, as this stimulates sebum production.

Most acne cases are not brought on by dirt in the atmosphere. Regular skin cleansing does help to minimise its severity, and boosts Physis to oppose bacterial infection.

Lifestyle measures

Tibb advises making meaningful lifestyle changes to *reduce the excess heat* associated with the person's acne. This is done by implementing Tibb Lifestyle Factors that *increase the quality of coldness*. These assist Physis in dealing with the underlying causes of acne, and prevent recurrence of the disorder in the future.

- **Food and drink.** Drinking plenty of pure water helps, as does adding anti-inflammatory herbs and spices (turmeric, ginger, cumin) to food and drink. The Tibb diet advice on acne is as follows:

Eat more Cold food	Salads, mango, pumpkin, carrots, cucumber, rice, dark green vegetables, citrus, yogurt, oily fish, avocado	Dampens excessive body heat
Eat less Hot food	Eggs, onions, chillies	Increases body heat levels
Limit intake	Sugary foods, dairy products, white flour items, cheese, red meats	These encourage bacterial invasion of the acne site
Avoid as much as possible	Heavily spiced foods, alcoholic drinks, fried foods Hot spices – turmeric, ginger and cumin	These aggravate heat levels and promote acne

[Tibb advice on food and drink for acne sufferers is available from:

www.tibb.co.za/healing-with-tibb.pdf page 26]

- **Physical activity.** Physical exercise increases blood flow to the skin, so helps the cells and glands located there perform better. The increased blood flow also supports the removal of natural metabolic waste products and environmental toxins. Even mild bouts of regular exercise, or increased intensity of daily activities, will flush out metabolic and cellular debris from the skin, for processing and elimination by the liver.

Another factor is that regular exercise progressively reduces stress levels. So if stress is a trigger of acne, then physical activity has an important part to play.

- **Stress relief.** Emotional stress is known to trigger and aggravate acne, so anything that helps to reduce it is of value. Meditation, greater physical activity, relaxation techniques and breathing exercises are known to dissipate stress, so are sanctioned by Tibb. A pleasant holiday also helps.

Conventional treatment

- *Skin treatment: medicated soaps and shampoos*
- *Antibiotics, antiseptics, steroid injections*
- *Chemicals: benzoyl peroxide, salicylic acid, azaleic acid, alpha-hydroxy acid and retinoids*
- *Surgery: dermabrasion, chemical peeling, laser therapy*
- *Oral treatment: antibiotics, contraceptives*
- *Others: ultraviolet light, vitamin supplements*

[Treatment recommended for three months at least]

Natural techniques

- Massaging the face with olive oil, tea tree oil, honey
- Applying masks made from oats, clay
- Rubbing lesions with fresh cut strawberry

Summary

For some people acne is trivial and inconvenient. For others, however, it is severe and persistent, and may leave unsightly skin scars. It is a common chronic disorder with acute flare-ups. It affects mainly adolescents, usually males, but does occur in older people and (rarely) infants. Acne appears mainly on the face and neck, but sometimes on the chest and upper back, as unsightly pimples. Although it is not dangerous, sufferers can feel anxious, miserable, and socially embarrassed. It occurs usually (but not only) in adolescent males due to inner disharmony brought on by an increase in the quality of heat, and the wild fluctuations in male hormones that occur at the time. This leads to the sebaceous glands over-secreting the natural oil needed for the hair follicles. The affected skin becomes more prone to infection, which in turn promotes inflammation. Tibb treatment focuses on simple hygiene measures and changes to the sufferer's lifestyle which supports his or her Physis in restoring inner harmony. These changes include a better diet (which aims to reduce the quality of heat); measures to reduce anxiety and mental stress; and increased physical activity. Herbal remedies are also available. Severe acne may need an integrative approach, combining active treatment with topical antibiotics, cleansing agents, hormone therapy or skin surgery. As Tibb affirms, everyone is different, so it is best for the sufferer to try different things to find out what works.

Further reading

Nature of acne: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acne_vulgaris

Tibb management of acne: www.tibb.co.za/ailments.html

Tibb and Physis: www.tibb.co.za/articles/Physis%20The%20best%20friend%20within%20.pdf

Natural treatments for acne: www.naturalnews.com/047658_acne_oil_cleansing_healthy_diet.html

Conventional treatment of acne: www.health24.com/Medical/Acne/Overview/How-to-treat-acne-20130206

Acne and emotional health: www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/acne/features/emotional-impact-acne