Acne

Acne is a common skin problem of teenagers and young adults. It is usually found on the face, chest, back, and shoulders. Acne occurs when the skin produces too much oil, causing the pores of the skin to "clog up" with oil and bacteria found normally on the skin. Acne is NOT caused by dirt or what you eat. Treating acne takes time and patience.

**Daily routine:**

1. Gently wash your face and other acne-affected areas with mild soap and warm water twice a day. Do not scrub your face. Rinse well with warm water and pat dry. Let your skin completely dry before applying acne medications. Mild soaps to use include Dove®, Cetaphil®, Purpose®, Oil of Olay®, Neutrogena® facial soap, and Vanicream®.

2. Keep your hands away from your face. Oil from your hands may worsen your acne. DO NOT squeeze or pick pimples. This can cause more acne and scarring.

3. Natural or artificial hair oils and grease may worsen acne. Keep your hair away from your face. Use non-oily hair products.

4. Do not wear hats. Hats can trap oils against your skin and make acne worse.

5. Do not wear tight clothing if you have acne on your chest, back, or shoulders. Tight clothing traps oils against your skin. Wearing cotton clothing while you exercise may help. Shower and change your clothes immediately after you exercise.

6. Use "oil-free" or non-comedogenic makeup. If at all possible, it is best not to use any makeup to cover acne.

**Over-the-counter acne medications:**

- **Benzoyl peroxide** will help unclog the pores and reduce skin bacteria. Because it contains peroxide, it may bleach clothing, sheets, or towels that it comes in contact with.

- **Sunscreens** are needed to protect your skin from further damage from the sun. Certain medications may make you more sun-sensitive. Use Neutrogena® Sensitive Skin (SPF 30-55), Neutrogena® (SPF 30), Coppertone® (Faces, Sport, or Ultraguard), Clinique® (SPF 50) or Vanicream® (SPF 30) sunscreen. The ingredients of the ideal sunscreen include zinc oxide, titanium dioxide, avobenzone, Helioplex®, and Mexoryl™.
Prescription medications:

- **A topical antibiotic** is used if your acne is inflamed.

- **Oral antibiotics** are used when there is marked skin inflammation and cyst formation.

- Some oral contraceptives can be helpful in young women with persistent acne.

- **Tretinoin, Retin-A®, Differin®, or Tazorac®** will help unclog the pores and peel the top layers of skin. Allow the skin to dry 20 minutes before applying the medication. Dryness of the skin and slight irritation is expected. Use a mild, oil-free moisturizer such as Cetaphil facial cream® (SPF 15), Oil of Olay Complete®, Neutrogena® Health Defense (SPF 45), Vanicream®, or Purpose®.

- **Isotretinoin (Accutane®)** is an oral vitamin A preparation that may be used if your acne does not respond to other treatments (cystic acne). Monthly blood work will be needed to monitor you while taking isotretinoin (Accutane®). It is critical that you do not become pregnant while taking this medication, as it can cause severe birth defects. (See "**Isotretinoin (Accutane®)**" TEEN CARD.)

Call your health care provider or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:

- A rash or itching develops.

- You have questions or concerns related to your acne.