

HOW TO TREAT DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACNE

To see clearer skin, it helps to know what types of blemishes you're dealing with. Each type requires different treatment.

What's that blemish?

Is that a blackhead, papule, or something else? See what the different acne blemishes looks like and how to treat them.



Blackheads and whiteheads

These appear when pores become clogged with excess oil, bacteria, and dead skin cells. If the pore closes up, you'll see a tiny bump that looks white or flesh colored. These are whiteheads.



Blackheads (dark spots) and pimples

If the pore fills with debris but stays open, you'll see a blackhead. The black dots aren't dirt, so resist scrubbing. It will only worsen your acne.



Treating whiteheads and blackheads

To unclog pores, dermatologists recommend using a retinoid. You can buy one retinoid, adapalene, without a prescription. You'll also want to use a benzoyl peroxide wash. It can help get rid of the excess *P. acnes* bacteria on your skin.



Stubborn whiteheads and blackheads

Give treatment six to eight weeks to work. If you still see blemishes, you may want to see a dermatologist. A procedure like comedo (medical term for blackheads and whiteheads) extraction may help. Prescription-strength acne treatment is another option.



Early pimples

When excess oil, bacteria, and dead skin cells push deeper into the skin and cause inflammation (redness and swelling), you'll see small, red bumps. The medical word for this type of acne blemish is a papule. They feel

hard. If you have a lot of papules, the area may feel like sandpaper.



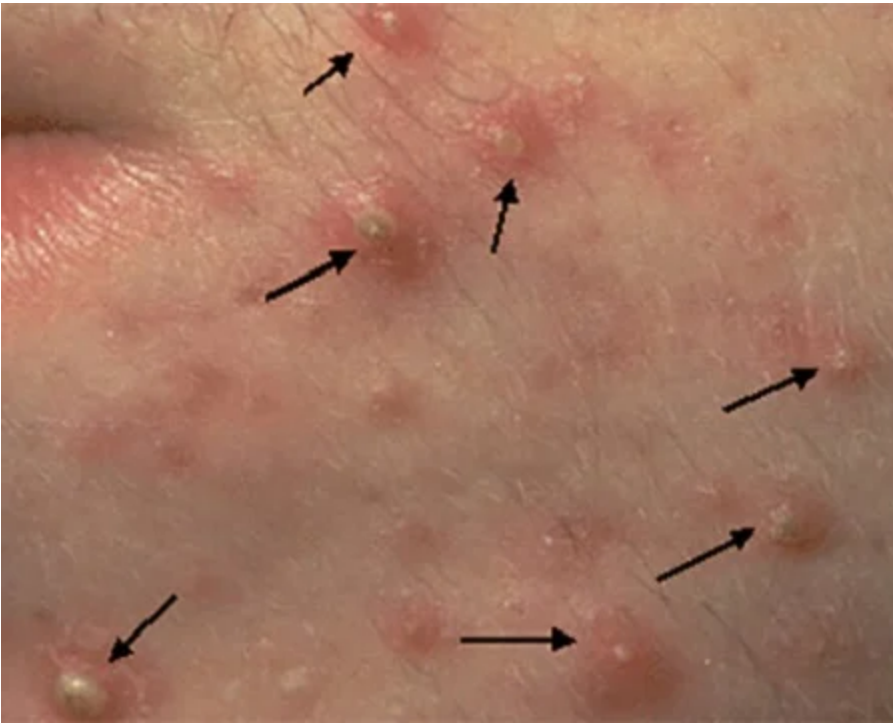
Treating papules

To clear this type of acne blemish, try washing your face twice daily with an acne face wash that contains benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid. If you have a lot of papules, it can be helpful to see a dermatologist.



Pus-filled pimples

The medical term for this type of acne blemish is pustule. These blemishes are a lot like papules, except that pustules contain a yellowish fluid. You'll often see a yellow- or white-colored center, as shown here.



Treating pustules

To treat, wash your face with an acne product that contains benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid. Resist the temptation to pop these. It can worsen acne. If you don't see results from treatment in six to eight weeks, see a dermatologist.



Acne nodules and cysts

These acne blemishes penetrate deep into the skin, and often cause permanent acne scars when they heal. If you have acne that looks like this, you'll need a dermatologist's help to treat it. The sooner you start treatment, the

fewer permanent scars you'll have.



Virtually everyone with acne can see clear skin

If you feel discouraged with your acne treatment and believe that nothing will work, you're not alone. Don't give up. Effective treatment is available. Sometimes, it requires a dermatologist's help.



Related AAD resources

- [Acne can affect more than your skin](#)

- [Acne myths: Are any preventing you from seeing clearer skin?](#)
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