



## Keep Teen Acne to a Minimum

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*Nearly every teen suffers from acne to some degree, but teen acne doesn't have to be something you child must suffer through. Early treatment can help keep your child's acne to a minimum, all through the teen years. Learn how to properly care for your young teen's skin and clear mild acne before it can progress. Your teen may actually thank you.*

**Be alert for beginning signs of acne.** Teen acne typically begins between the ages of 10 to 13, with many children showing beginning signs of acne as early as age eight. Watch for small **blackheads** (A non-inflamed acne lesion characterized by an obvious dark brown to black plug at the surface of the pore), and early **papules**, (An inflamed acne lesion presenting as a small, red bump on the skin that does not contain pus). Watch for early onset on the nose, where acne usually starts. As acne worsens, it spreads to the forehead, then cheeks and chin. The goal should be to catch breakouts early before they begin to spread. The sooner you begin treatment, the better the results will be.

**Emphasize basic cleansing.** Beginning around age nine, children should cleanse their faces every night with a gentle cleanser such as Dove or Neutrogena. Many times this alone will improve mild comedones. Daily facial cleansing is especially important for boys, as they tend to develop more severe and longer lasting acne. If you notice beginning papules or pustules, have your child use a **benzoyl peroxide** cleanser once or twice a day. If the cleanser dries your child's face, lightly apply an oil-free, fragrance-free moisturizer after every cleansing.

**Use mild treatment creams.** A benzoyl peroxide cream (2.5% strength) is a good choice for adolescents that are experiencing red or inflamed breakouts. Benzoyl peroxide is a very common and inexpensive acne treatment cream that can be found over-the-counter in the skin care aisle. Highly successful at treating mild cases of acne, benzoyl peroxide kills the bacteria that cause pimples. Apply a thin layer of benzoyl peroxide cream over all affected areas once or twice daily, after cleansing. Monitor your child's face for redness, irritation, or excessive dryness. If they occur, scale back use to every other day.

**Teach a hands-off policy.** Teach your child not to pick at or "pop" pimples. Doing so can force infected material deeper into the dermis, creating a more severe lesion. **Picking at a pimple** can cause scarring, exacerbate inflammation, and generally worsens acne. It can also lead to a serious infection. They may need gentle reminders to encourage them to keep their hands away from their face. Explain that popping pimples can aggravate acne, making pimples look more red and obvious, and causing more breakouts.

**See a doctor, if needed.** If your child's acne doesn't respond to home treatment or your child seems extremely upset about his skin, your next step should be to see a dermatologist. Your dermatologist can help create a treatment plan that will help your child. Again, don't wait to seek treatment. The sooner you begin treating acne, the easier it is to control.

- Choose very mild products. Your child's skin is sensitive, and harsh products can irritate the skin and exacerbate acne.
- You child may be reluctant to talk about his or her skin problems, especially if they feel self-conscious about their breakouts. Try not to "nag" about their skin care routine and, above all, be supportive.
- You may want to enlist the help of your doctor or other skin care professional to educate your child of the importance of good daily skin care.