



## Acne

You have been given this leaflet because you have asked for acne treatment that you can get “over the counter” (OTC) from pharmacies. After a local and national public consultation on OTC medicines, we do not prescribe simple acne treatment anymore. Acne is a common condition and most people with mild symptoms are able to treat themselves with OTC products.

### How can I avoid triggers/ suggested lifestyle changes

- Wash the affected area with a mild soap or cleanser and lukewarm water.
- Completely remove make-up before going to bed.
- Wash your hair regularly and try to avoid letting your hair fall across your face.
- If using cosmetics, use water-based products which are described as non-comedogenic (this means the product is less likely to block the pores in your skin).
- Try to exercise more, regular exercise can't improve your acne, but it can boost your mood and improve your self-esteem. Shower once you finish exercising, as sweat can irritate your acne.
- If your skin is dry, don't wash affected areas of skin more than twice a day. Frequent washing can irritate the skin and make symptoms worse.
- Don't try to "clean out" blackheads or squeeze spots. This can make them worse and cause scarring.
- Don't use too much make-up and cosmetics; use a fragrance-free, water-based emollient.

### How do I treat acne?

Several creams, lotions and gels for treating spots can be purchased from pharmacies without seeing a doctor. **Speak to your pharmacist** - for advice if you're not sure which type of medicine is best for you and your symptoms. Treatments may take up to three months to work.

### Examples of medicines available to buy include

(Some products may have restrictions)

- Creams, gels and face wash containing low concentrations of benzoyl peroxide. They may cause skin irritation and can bleach clothing or bedding.

### When should I seek advice?

Seek advice from your pharmacist or GP if initial treatment with over the counter preparations doesn't work for you, or if any of the following warning symptoms are present:

- **Severity** - Your acne is really bad and you feel physically unwell because of it.
- **Pain** - You develop painful spots that feel 'deep' in your skin.
- **Distress** - You get distressed by your acne, and/or it affects your social life.
- **Scarring** - You notice the beginning of scarring despite treatment.
- **Possible underlying medical causes** - You suspect that you may have an underlying medical condition that causes your acne – for example, if you have additional symptoms such as infrequent or absent periods, excessive hair growth, or hair loss.

### For more information

- Visit your local pharmacy for advice

Be self-care aware

Find out more about self-care at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)