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## **ACNE TREATMENT OPTIONS AND APPROACHES**

### **TOPICAL MEDICATIONS:**

**Benzoyl peroxide** is available by prescription and in lesser strengths over the counter. It is usually applied once a day. It can be irritating if used around the eyes and mouth. It should be used carefully since it can bleach clothing. If used excessively, benzoyl peroxide can cause drying and redness.

**Salicylic acid** helps correct the abnormal shedding of skin cells and unclogs pores to resolve and prevent acne. Salicylic acid is found in many over-the-counter acne products, including lotions, creams and pads. It may be irritating to the skin.

**Retinoids** are derivatives of vitamin A and have been a mainstay in acne treatment for many years. They decrease the stickiness of plugged sebaceous glands. They work on all types of acne. Use a small-pea sized amount to the entire face as overuse can cause dryness, irritation, and redness. Retinoids can make skin more sun sensitive so sunscreen and caution with facial waxing is recommended. Common names are Tretinoin (Retin-A, Atralin), Adapelene (Differin), or Tazarotene (Tazorac).

**Topical antibiotics** come in different forms. They help reduce the amount of bacteria on the surface of the skin thereby preventing inflammation and the formation of new pimples. They are to be applied to the skin once to twice a day.

**Azelaic acid** (Finacea) is used to treat mild to moderate acne. It is believed that azelaic acid clears acne by reducing the populations of bacteria, decreasing the abnormal shedding of skin cells and reducing inflammation. Side effects may include skin dryness and lightening of the skin where applied. It can be used to treat unwanted pigmentation from resolved acne spots.

**How to use topical medicines:** To decrease the chance of skin irritation, start applying acne medications every 2-3 days and work-up to every day as tolerated. Apply medicine to all areas of your face (not spot-treatment). It's fine to apply multiple topical medicines at the same time.

### **SYSTEMIC MEDICATIONS:**

**Antibiotics** are used for mild-to-moderate and moderate-to-severe acne. They work to reduce bacteria thereby reducing inflammation. A typical course of treatment should be 3-6 months, with frequent reassessments. Many different antibiotics are commonly used. Particular to one of the most common antibiotics, doxycycline, it should not be taken within 30 minutes of lying down as it can lead to irritation of the esophagus. It will also make you sensitive to the sun so use of daily sunscreen and avoidance of sun exposure is recommended.

**Oral contraceptives and hormonal medications** (spironolactone) have been shown to effectively clear acne in women by decreasing circulating male hormones called androgens, thereby decreasing sebum (oil) production.

**Isotretinoin** (acutane) is a potent oral medication that is used for cystic, refractory acne that does not respond to any of the other medication. Used over a four to six month period, it works to decrease inflammation as well as formation of comedones. Because of some potentially serious side effects, patients undergoing isotretinoin are enrolled in the iPledge system, monitored with monthly appointments and laboratory examination. Fifty percent of patients will experience complete clearance of their acne after one course of isotretinoin.

**Other oral medications** such as niacinamide, zinc, copper are being used for acne as they have been shown to have anti-inflammatory properties.

**OTHER THERAPEUTIC MODALITIES:**

- Light therapies (blue and red light)
- Chemical peels (SA, GA)
- Intralesional steroid injections are commonly used for stubborn cystic lesions

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the office at 203-635-0770.