

# Acne and Rosacea Still Common Skin Diagnoses in the United States

Acne affects 17 million Americans annually making it the most common skin disorder in the country. All of us have enjoyed the gratification of clearing up a terrible case of acne for a patient and watching their self-esteem soar. However, not all acne is easy to treat. Keep in mind there are serious medical disorders that may be confused with acne. Just last week, I had a 26-year-old female model come in with episodic, cystic acne. After spending over 30 minutes discussing her many other symptoms and trying to make sense of her health, lifestyle, level of stress, and diet, I started her on classic treatments but also referred her to a brilliant endocrinologist to rule out autoimmune disease or other endocrinopathies. Indeed, she has multiple abnormalities on her initial labs, including a high positive antinuclear antibody count. So before we skip to treatments and lasers and light sources, let us pause and consider the rare case of serious medical disorders that can present as acne.

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Some medical causes of acne include folliculitis, eczema, systemic lupus erythematosus, polycystic ovarian syndrome, medication induced acne (lithium, bromides, hormones, and cessation of oral contraceptive pills). Also, rosacea is often misdiagnosed as classic acne. We used to say that if you see comedones, it must be acne vulgaris. Now, it is thought that the overlap between rosacea and acne is fairly common especially in older individuals.

Here are a few facts: nearly 100% of teens have comedones, men are more likely to have acne when they are young, and women are more likely to have adult-onset acne. While treatments are more effective and better tolerated than they were several years ago, the focus of treatments has not changed: exfoliate, eliminate the bacteria, and decrease sebum production.

Over the counter formulations are also better than ever. Compliance rates have always been a confounding issue to treatment success. With new kits teaching patients exactly what steps to take and when, plus refilling their products automatically, the average acne patient may be better informed.

Even so, acne and rosacea can be incredibly stressful to our patients and extremely challenging to us. In this issue, we will cover some new techniques and review treatment options for acne and rosacea.

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