

Acne (spots)

This fact sheet helps you to know what's 'normal' and what you can expect to happen if you suffer from acne (spots). It also tells you when you should become concerned and seek advice from a health professional.

Useful facts

- **What is acne?** Acne tends to start at puberty and leads to greasy skin and 'spots'. People may feel bad about themselves because of the way their skin looks, often at a time when they're already vulnerable.
- **How common is acne?** You're not alone – acne affects more than 8 out of 10 teenagers to some degree, and more frequently boys. Around one in three teenagers have acne bad enough to need treatment. In women, acne is more common around the time of their monthly periods.
- **What's causing it?** Acne is caused by inflamed skin glands on your face and upper trunk, sometimes caused through an infection. In *rare* cases, acne may be caused by an underlying medical condition, such as *polycystic ovary disease (PCO)* or other hormonal disorders. It's a myth that stress or certain foods (such as chocolate) cause acne – and acne is certainly not due to a lack of cleanliness!

What can I expect to happen?

- ✓ **Duration** Acne is a long-term condition that may need immediate treatment for treating severely affected skin, and maintenance therapy to keep spots from recurring. In 7 out of 10 people, acne stops within five years – but some people may suffer lifelong.
- ✓ **Severity** Acne can vary from being mild and localised to severe and widespread.
- ✓ **Impact on your life** Acne can severely affect people's quality of life, regardless of how bad it is.
- ✓ **Tests** You won't need any tests unless your doctor suspects an underlying medical cause.

Continued overleaf

