

**Oratane**<sup>®</sup>  
isotretinoin

# ACNE TREATMENT PROGRAMME

INFORMATION

IT IS IMPORTANT TO  
READ AND UNDERSTAND  
THIS INFORMATION



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# INTRODUCTION

**Acne is not caused by junk food, eating chocolate or dirty skin.**

Acne is a skin disease and it should be treated as one.

## **WHO GETS ACNE?**

Acne is common. It affects most people during their teenage years. 80% of people have suffered from acne at some time in their lives. 5% of these people suffer from very severe acne.

Acne is not caused by junk food, eating chocolate or dirty skin. Acne is a skin disease and it should be treated as one.

## **WHAT IS ORATANE?**

Oratane capsules contain a medication known as isotretinoin. Isotretinoin is often a cure for acne. It is a similar substance to Vitamin A, but the action of isotretinoin is very different.

Oratane works by reducing the amount of oily substances produced by the oil making glands in your skin. This reduces the amount of bacteria in the skin. These bacteria are the cause of the 'pus' and inflammation found with acne. Oratane may help reduce the inflammation of the skin.

## **WHY HAS ORATANE BEEN PRESCRIBED FOR ME?**

Your doctor has probably prescribed Oratane for you because other treatments for your acne have been unsuccessful.

You probably haven't been prescribed Oratane earlier because it is considered to be a good idea to try other treatments, such as creams and antibiotics, for your acne first.

While you are taking Oratane you will need to follow very carefully all the instructions given to you by your doctor. You should also follow the advice given to you in this booklet, as it will help you to look after your skin during your Oratane treatment.

## **WHEN WILL I STOP USING ORATANE?**

The course of Oratane treatment will vary from patient to patient. Your doctor will advise you how long to take your Oratane. In most cases the treatment lasts for around 16 weeks, but could last up to six months or more. You should follow your doctor's instructions carefully.



BEFORE ISOTRETINOIN



DURING ISOTRETINOIN



AFTER ISOTRETINOIN

In over 80% of cases Oratane will completely clear your acne by the end of one treatment. The healing process that is started with Oratane may continue after the treatment has ceased. You will need to keep taking your Oratane for as long as your doctor has told you to, if you stop sooner you may not get the full benefits of Oratane.

If your acne has not been completely cured, a second course of Oratane may be considered by your doctor.

### ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS?

As with all medicines, there are side effects with Oratane. The side effects include dryness in several parts of the body, possible tiredness, and sometimes aching of the muscles and bones. More information on side effects can be found in the Side Effects section of this booklet.

### ORATANE AND POTENTIAL BIRTH DEFECTS

**Oratane should *NEVER* be used by pregnant women or by women who intend to become pregnant, during or for one month after, their Oratane treatment.**

All possibility of pregnancy **MUST** be ruled out before you start your Oratane treatment. Strict birth control methods should be used for one month before you start your Oratane, during your whole Oratane treatment and for one month after you stop taking Oratane.

One month after you have finished your Oratane, you can resume your normal practices.

Further information about Oratane and birth defects can be found in the **Contraception** section of this booklet.

There is no known risk to males who wish to father children.

## **WHO CAN TAKE ORATANE?**

Oratane is suitable for almost everyone with acne, regardless of sex or age. People who can't take Oratane include pregnant women or women who are breast feeding and people suffering from certain medical conditions. Please tell your doctor if you have any other conditions or take any other medications.

## **LABORATORY TESTS**

Sometimes you may be asked to have blood tests done. These establish a baseline for your liver function, blood lipids, and for females can also confirm that you are not pregnant. Follow your doctors advice before having blood taken.

# USING ORATANE

**It is important that you do not change the amount of Oratane you are taking.**

If you think it is too strong or too weak speak to your doctor.

## HOW DO I USE ORATANE?

It is very important to follow the instructions given to you by your doctor. These instructions will help to make sure you are getting the right dose of Oratane. In determining the exact dosage you need, your doctor will have considered the severity of your acne and your body mass.

It is important not to miss any of your Oratane capsules, or to take too many Oratane capsules. If you do miss a dose you should not take a double dose to make up for it, you should wait until it is time for your next dose and take your Oratane as normal, then continue taking your Oratane in the usual way.

## YOUR DAILY DOSE OF ORATANE IS:

| Week             | Number of Capsules per day | Dose per day |
|------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| <b>1 - 2</b>     | __ x __ mg Caps / Day      | _____ mg     |
| <b>3 - 4</b>     | __ x __ mg Caps / Day      | _____ mg     |
| <b>5 onwards</b> | __ x __ mg Caps / Day      | _____ mg     |

If you ever need to check what your dose is you can refer to the above information.

Your doctor has prescribed a particular dose of Oratane for you for a specific reason. It is important that you do not change the amount of Oratane you are taking, if you think it is too strong or too weak speak to your doctor. Your doctor may vary your dose of Oratane, depending on how your body responds to the treatment. Only your doctor should change your dose of Oratane.

You should continue taking your Oratane for as long as your doctor instructs you to.



BEFORE ISOTRETINOIN



DURING ISOTRETINOIN



AFTER ISOTRETINOIN

## WHAT MUST I DO WHILE TAKING ORATANE?

While taking Oratane you MUST:

- Take your Oratane capsules with meals.
- NOT chew or suck the capsules.
- Swallow the capsules whole with water or another non-alcoholic drink.
- Take each dose of Oratane when it is due.
- Follow your doctor's instructions.

If you follow the above instructions as closely as possible your Oratane will work better.

## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM ORATANE?

When you first start taking Oratane you may find that your acne starts to get worse. This does not mean that the medication is not working. If this happens to you, do not be discouraged, keep taking your Oratane, as prescribed by your doctor. The worsening of your acne nearly always stops within the first few weeks, and then your acne will start to clear. If you have any worries or concerns about this, contact your doctor. Within the first four weeks of starting Oratane you will notice that your skin is much drier than before. This is because the Oratane is starting to work by reducing the amount of oil being produced by your skin. You may also find that you need to wash your hair less often.

By the second month your acne will be showing signs of improving. The improvement should continue throughout your Oratane treatment.

## WHEN I FINISH MY ORATANE

If you have any Oratane capsules left when you have finished your treatment it is very important that you return them to your doctor or pharmacist.

Never give your Oratane to anyone else, even if they have acne. Oratane is a prescription only medicine. Oratane should only be used under the supervision of a doctor.

At the conclusion of your Oratane treatment your acne should have significantly cleared. Your skin should continue clearing, possibly for one or two months, after the Oratane treatment has ceased. The side effects associated with Oratane treatment will begin to clear at the conclusion of the treatment.

# CONTRACEPTION

SECTION 03

## VERY IMPORTANT!

If you are female it is **extremely** important that you **read** and **understand** the information in this section.

### WHY MUST I PREVENT PREGNANCY?

Even if you are not sexually active it is important that you understand the effects that Oratane can have on the unborn child should you become pregnant while taking Oratane.

The medication in Oratane, isotretinoin, is **teratogenic**. This means that it can cause birth defects, that is, the unborn child can become deformed.

Birth defects can only be caused by Oratane if you use Oratane while you are pregnant, become pregnant while you are using Oratane or become pregnant within one month of stopping taking your Oratane.

Your doctor may give you a pregnancy test to ensure that you are not pregnant before allowing you to start taking Oratane. Should you become pregnant while taking Oratane or within one month after the end of your Oratane treatment you will need to discuss the action that may need to be taken with your doctor. This is a very serious situation.

For this reason it is vitally important to follow strict birth control procedures.

### WHO NEEDS TO BE REALLY CAREFUL?

ALL women of child bearing potential! This means any woman or girl, who is taking Oratane, who has started menstruating needs to follow a strict birth control procedure.

Before you can begin taking Oratane you may be required to take a pregnancy test.

You **MUST** use strict birth control for at least **one month** before you start your Oratane treatment, during the **entire** Oratane treatment and for at least **one month** after you stop taking Oratane.

You should wait until the 2nd or 3rd day of your next menstrual period before you start taking Oratane. This is an extra check to make sure you are not pregnant.

If you do become pregnant while you are taking Oratane, you should immediately stop taking your Oratane and tell your doctor straight away.

Oratane does not affect your fertility in the long term. So even after taking Oratane you should be able to become pregnant in the future.

### **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING SURE I DON'T GET PREGNANT?**

**You are!** The only person who can make sure that you do not get pregnant while you are taking Oratane is you. It is relatively easy to prevent pregnancy. The details of the recommended strict birth control procedure are explained below.

Before you begin taking Oratane your doctor will go through the risks associated with Oratane and pregnancy. Your doctor may ask you to sign a Consent Form. Signing this form means that you understand these risks and that you will do everything possible to make sure that you do not become pregnant while you are taking Oratane or for one month after you stop taking Oratane.

### **WHAT IS STRICT BIRTH CONTROL?**

Strict birth control or contraception means carefully following a procedure to make sure you do not become pregnant. The most effective form of birth control or contraception is 'the pill' (oral contraceptive) plus a barrier method (condom or diaphragm). You should carefully follow all the directions for the use of these methods of contraception.

Your doctor or your local Family Planning Clinic can provide you with more information about contraception. You will need a prescription for 'the pill', which can be provided by your doctor or local Family Planning Clinic.

#### **WHEN CAN I STOP BEING SO CAREFUL?**

One *month* after the end of your Oratane treatment the risk of birth defects is no greater than normal.

Should you wish to become pregnant, you can do so one month after you have stopped taking Oratane.

#### **WHERE CAN I GET MORE HELP AND INFORMATION?**

For further information about contraception contact your family doctor or your local Family Planning Clinic.

# SIDE EFFECTS

## WHY ARE THERE SIDE EFFECTS WITH ORATANE?

All medicines have side effects. With Oratane the side effects are closely linked to Oratane actually working. If you are experiencing the side effects, then your Oratane is working and it won't be long before your acne starts improving. The side effects of Oratane can range from mild to severe. Most of the side effects can be kept under control.

## WHO WILL GET SIDE EFFECTS?

Everyone! With Oratane everyone taking it will get some side effects. On the bright side, these side effects are a really good way to tell that your Oratane is actually working and they can be kept under control with good skin care. Some advice on how to control the side effects that happen while you are using Oratane can be found in the ***Skin Care*** section of this booklet.

The intensity of the side effects will vary from patient to patient. Most of the common side effects are not very bad. It is important for you to be aware of the side effects that may occur while you are taking Oratane. It is also important for you to remember that you will not get all of the side effects mentioned in this section; you may only get one or two mild side effects. If you get side effects while taking Oratane you may find that they wear off with time.

## WHAT ARE THE COMMON SIDE EFFECTS?

You may start to get some side effects with Oratane before your acne starts to clear. This will tell you that your Oratane is working and it is just a matter of time before your acne starts to improve.

When you first start taking Oratane one of the first side effects you may notice is that your acne starts to get worse. This does not mean that your Oratane is not working. You need to keep taking your Oratane as prescribed by your doctor. Within seven to ten days your acne should stop getting worse and should then start to clear.

Dryness of the skin is the most common side effect with Oratane. Since Oratane works by drying up the oily glands in your skin you will find that your skin will become drier and more fragile. You may find that your lips become dry and cracked. Your face may look

redder than usual and your skin may start to peel. It is important to look after your skin, the instructions in the **Skin Care** section of this booklet will help you keep the side effects under control.

A less common side effect of Oratane treatment is drying of the inside of the nose and dry eyes. Drying of the nose can be uncomfortable and can lead to nose bleeds. There are ways to prevent and manage this. These are explained in the **Skin Care** section of this booklet. Dry eyes can be a problem for people who wear contact lenses or people who work in air conditioned areas. You may find that you need to use eyedrops to keep your eyes moist. You may also find that you cannot wear your contact lenses for as long as you did before starting on Oratane.

While you are taking Oratane you will find that your skin is more sensitive to the sun. You will need to take extra care to avoid sunburn. You should wear a sunscreen daily and try to avoid spending a long time in the sun.

### **WHAT ARE THE OTHER SIDE EFFECTS?**

Most patients will not experience the side effects listed in this section, these side effects are not very common.

There have been reports of people taking Oratane finding that their joints and muscles feel tender and stiff. This can be a problem if you are intending to do a lot of heavy exercise while taking Oratane. It is a good idea to discuss this with your doctor.

Other serious but rarely experienced side effects of Oratane include skin infections especially around fingernails and toenails, peeling of the palms and soles of the feet, bleeding and inflammation of the gums, headaches, blurred vision, dizziness, weight loss, diarrhoea and an abnormal menstrual cycle. Thinning of the hair may also occur; this is more common in men. You should immediately tell your doctor if you feel that the medication is making you unhappy or depressed.

It is important to remember that the side effects seen with Oratane treatment are reversible. They should disappear soon after you have stopped taking Oratane.

The only side effects that is not reversible are the birth defects that can be caused if you become pregnant while taking Oratane. There is detailed information about how and why you **MUST** prevent pregnancy while taking Oratane in the **Contraception** section of this booklet.

### **WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR ME TO TELL MY DOCTOR?**

It is important for you to make sure that you tell your doctor if any of the things listed below happen.

- If you can't tolerate the side effects you are getting while taking Oratane tell your doctor. Your dose of Oratane may need to be changed.
- If you get any of the serious less common side effects mentioned in the section: 'What Are the Other Side Effects?'
- If you feel unhappy or depressed.

### **WHEN WILL THE SIDE EFFECTS GO AWAY?**

When you have finished your course of Oratane. Because Oratane is causing the side effects, when you have finished taking Oratane the side effects should go away.

### **WHERE CAN I GET MORE HELP AND INFORMATION?**

If you have any questions about the side effects that you have, or will get while you are on Oratane, you can talk to your doctor or call Douglas Pharmaceuticals Ltd (the people who make Oratane) on their toll free number 0508 672 826.

Further information about acne can be found in the **Further Information on Acne** section of this booklet.

For even more information visit our website at [www.oratane.co.nz](http://www.oratane.co.nz) or the dermatological website [www.dermnet.org.nz](http://www.dermnet.org.nz)

# SKIN CARE

## WHY DO I NEED SPECIAL SKIN CARE?

While you are taking Oratane you will have to take a little extra care of your skin as Oratane will make your skin drier and more fragile. The information in this section will help you to look after your skin and keep the side effects of Oratane under control. It is a good idea to follow the skin care advice given in this section even before you start to notice any of the side effects related to Oratane. Prevention is always better than cure.

## WHAT NOT TO DO WHILE TAKING ORATANE

It is important to follow this list of things not to do so that your skin remains in good condition.

- **Do not squeeze any pimples.** This can make the pimples worse and can damage your skin, resulting in skin infections.
- **Do not remove any scaly or peeling skin.** Since your skin is fragile you can damage your skin by trying to remove scaly and peeling skin, this could lead to skin infections.
- **Do not have facials.** Because your skin is fragile the potentially harsh treatments involved in a facial can cause damage to your skin.
- **Do not have waxes.** Waxing while your skin is fragile can actually remove skin as well as hair!
- **Do not use other acne medication.** Oratane is a strong medication and you should not use any other medication unless your doctor has specifically told you to do so.
- **Do not have any part of your body pierced.** There can be a serious risk of infection of any new piercing while you are on Oratane.
- **Do not have electrolysis.** Because your skin is fragile, electrolysis has the potential to damage your skin.
- **Do not use hair colouring** containing peroxide and do not have a perm or use hair rollers. If you want to get your hair permed it is best to do so at least two weeks before you start taking your Oratane. While you are taking Oratane your scalp will be more sensitive and your hair will be more fragile, because of this it is important to avoid harsh hair treatments such as colours and perms.
- **Do not use solariums and sunbeds.** Solariums and sunbeds can burn your skin just like the sun, your skin is more sensitive to the sun while you are taking Oratane and it is also too sensitive to use a solarium and sun bed.
- **Do not have overly hot showers.** Very hot showers can irritate your skin.



ORATANE CAPSULES

## WHAT CAN I DO TO EASE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

The most common side effect of Oratane, dryness, is relatively easy to treat. The following section contains a list of products that can be used to relieve dryness. If you notice anything unusual about your skin or anything that concerns you, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about it. It is a good idea to write down anything you notice or any questions you have for your doctor. The Notes section at the end of this booklet is a good place to do this.



FACE WASHES AND CLEANSERS

## WHAT PRODUCTS CAN I USE TO EASE THE SIDE EFFECTS

### *Dry Skin*

Dry skin is the most common side effect of Oratane treatment. You can expect your skin to become drier all over your body. To help protect your skin it is best to keep your showers shorter than two minutes if possible and use luke warm water rather than hot water.

### *Face Cleansers*

These cleansers are designed for use on the face. You should only use cleansers that are intended for use on sensitive skin. Products you could try are: Innoxia Sensitivity Gentle Cleansing Milk, Cetaphil Lotion and Avene Extremely Gentle Cleanser.



QV GENTLE WASH

### *Body Cleansers*

Body cleansers should not be used on the face, unless they are also included in the Face Cleansers section. It is better for your skin if you try to avoid soaps and use one of the cleansers listed in this section. Products you could try are:

QV Bath Oil, QV Bar, QV Wash, Neutrogena Extra Gentle Cleanser, Hamiltons Mild Foam Wash and Dove Soap.



FACE AND BODY MOISTURISERS



QV CREAM



QV LOTION



DRY NOSE

### **Face Moisturisers**

Using a moisturiser on your face regularly will help keep the dryness that may be seen with Oratane treatment under control. The best type of moisturiser is an oil free face moisturiser for sensitive skin, you should avoid greasy moisturisers. Products you could try are: QV Lotion, Clinique Oil-Free Moisturiser, Hamilton Dry Skin Treatment and Avène Skin Recovery Cream.

### **Body Moisturisers**

Body moisturisers should not be used on the face, unless they are also included in the Face Moisturisers section. To keep your skin in good condition you should use a moisturising lotion on your whole body, even if you don't seem to have any dryness, prevention is always better than cure. For extremely dry areas use a cream, rather than a lotion. Products you could try are:

QV Skin Lotion, QV Cream, Hydraderm Lotion, Vaseline Intensive Care Lotion, Hamilton Dry Skin Treatment and Innoxia Sensitivity Soothing Moisture Lotion.

### **Dry lips**

Your lips are particularly sensitive to the drying effects of Oratane. This makes it important to look after them well. This can be achieved very simply by applying a lip balm regularly.

By applying a lip balm every one to two hours you can prevent your lips from becoming dry and cracked. Make sure you also pay attention to the corners of your mouth, this area is prone to cracking. A lip balm that contains a sunscreen is best. You should carry a tube of lip balm with you during the day. You should see your local doctor if your lips become very cracked or begin bleeding. Products you could try are:

QV Lip Balm, Vaseline Lip Therapy, Lip Sed, Blistex, Hamilton Lipz Lip Ointment and Avène Lip Balm with Cold Cream.

### **Dry Nose**

The inside of your nose can also become dry while you are taking Oratane. If this becomes severe it can result in nosebleeds. To keep the inside of your nose moist you should apply a small amount of petroleum jelly a few times a day using a cotton bud. If you suffer from persistent nose bleeds or your nose bleeds are difficult to stop, you will need to see your pharmacist or your doctor. Severe nose bleeds can be treated with prescription products.

### **Dry Eyes**

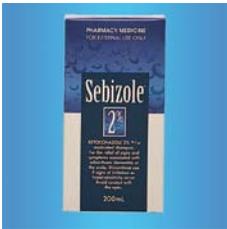
If you find that your eyes feel dry or sore then you may need to use eyedrops to keep them moist. Dry eyes can be a particular problem for people who wear contact lenses or people who work in air-conditioned areas. If you wear contact lenses you may find that you



DRY EYES



SUN CARE



SEBIZOLE

cannot wear your contact lenses for as long as you did before starting on Oratane. For dry eyes, products you could try are (if you wear contact lenses check with your optometrist to make sure that these products are suitable):

Allergan Tears Plus, Allergan Liquifilm Tears, Alcon Tears Naturale, Alcon Poly-Tears, Alcon Bion Tears and Allergan Lacri-Lube Ointment (this is an overnight eye moisturising ointment) and Vismed Lubricant eyedrops.

### ***Sun Care***

Oratane will make your skin more sensitive to the sun. You will need to make sure that you are well protected from the sun. You should not sunbathe, even with a sunscreen, or use a solarium. The best way to do this is to cover up as much as possible, wear a hat with a brim and wear a sunscreen, preferably one with a 30+ sun protection factor. The best sunscreens are oil free and alcohol free. Products you could try are:

SunSense Sport Sunscreen SPF 30+, SunSense Daily Face Matt Sunscreen SPF 30+, Aquasun SPF 30+ and Avene Very High Protective Sunscreen SPF30+, Hamilton Sunscreen Milk SPF 30+ and Hamilton Everyday Face Sunscreen SPF 30+.

### ***Dry Hair and Dandruff***

If you find that your scalp and hair are drier than usual you may need to use a mild shampoo designed for dry hair. You should use a conditioner to help protect your hair and scalp. You should avoid using hair dyes, especially dyes containing peroxide, as they may make your hair and scalp drier and can cause irritation.

If dandruff becomes a problem you should use a medicated anti-dandruff shampoo. You could try the following shampoo products for dry hair and dandruff:

Sebizole Shampoo, DermaVeen Oatmeal Shampoo, Johnson's Baby Shampoo, Galderma IoniT Shampoo, and Ducray Extra Gentle Shampoo.

### ***Dry Vagina***

You may find that your vagina is dry and this may cause pain during sexual intercourse. You can use DP Lubricating Gel or K-Y Jelly to help relieve this problem.

### ***Dry Anus***

You may experience some dryness and irritation around the anus. You can help relieve and reduce this problem by applying petroleum jelly several times a day.



COSMETICS



LIP BALMS

### **Cosmetics**

Makeup can sometimes aggravate your acne but if you choose your products carefully you can still wear makeup if you want to.

#### **Foundations**

You will need to use an oil free foundation, preferably one with a sunscreen. Products you could try are: Lancôme Pure Complexion Watercolour Oil-Free Foundation, Estee Lauder Double-Matte Oil Control Make-Up, Clinique Oil-Free Foundation, Revlon New Complexion Oil-Free Foundation.

#### **Powders**

Most powders are suitable for use while taking Oratane.

#### **Cover Sticks**

You should use a medicated cover stick. Products you could try are: Clinique (medicated) Cover Stick and Clearasil Tinted Cover Cream.

#### **Lipsticks**

All lipsticks are suitable for use while taking Oratane. The best lipsticks to use are those that contain sunscreens. It is also a good idea to wear a lip balm under your lipstick, because this will provide better protection for your lips.

#### **Lip Balms**

A lip balm that contains a sunscreen is best. You should carry a tube of lip balm with you during the day. Products you could try are: QV Lip Balm, Vaseline Lip Therapy, Lip Sed, Blistex, Hamilton Lipz Lip Ointment and Avene Lip Balm with Cold Cream.

#### **Blushers**

You should only use powder blushes while you are taking Oratane. Products you could try are: Clinique Soft-Pressed Powder Blusher and Revlon Naturally Glamourous Blush-On.

# CHANGES IN MY LIFESTYLE?



BEFORE ISOTRETINOIN



AFTER ISOTRETINOIN

### **MINOR, FOR A SHORT TIME!**

While taking Oratane you can do most things you normally do - unless you have been told not to by your doctor or this booklet advises against it. Some minor changes may need to be made to your lifestyle to make it easier for you to deal with the effect the medication has on you. You will have to make sure that you look after yourself by eating properly and caring for your skin. It is important that you read and understand about all the potential side effects, but remember that you will not get all of them. Once you have finished your Oratane treatment your life will be back to normal, only without acne!

### **ORATANE DOS AND DON'TS**

There are some other important things you need to be careful of while you are taking Oratane. These are:

- Do wear a sunscreen, 30+ is best.
- Don't drink a lot of alcohol.
- Don't donate blood until at least four weeks after you have stopped taking your Oratane.
- Don't take any Vitamin A supplements (check your multivitamins).

### **OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS**

**WHILE TAKING ORATANE YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE ANY TETRACYCLINES. THESE ARE ANTIBIOTICS, WHICH YOU MAY HAVE TRIED FOR YOUR ACNE, IN THE PAST.**

Oratane can also affect you if you do a lot of physical training or sport. You may experience muscle fatigue which can lead to reduced performance. You should also try to avoid contact sports while you are taking Oratane. If you are training for an upcoming event or playing a seasonal sport you may wish to delay your Oratane treatment until a more convenient time. While you are using Oratane you should try to avoid using creams or gels that may irritate your skin. This includes products like sports gels and arthritis creams.

# FURTHER INFORMATION ON ACNE?

***Acne is a common skin condition. Acne consists of blackheads, whiteheads, red spots, and sometimes deeper boil-like spots, these are called nodules or cysts. Acne affects most people during their teenage years. However, the problem sometimes continues into adulthood.***

Acne develops in the oil-producing glands of the skin. These glands are called sebaceous glands. The oily substances produced by the sebaceous glands is called sebum. The sebaceous glands are present in large numbers on the face, chest, upper back and shoulders. The sebaceous glands are connected to the hairs that grow in the pores in these areas.

Normally, sebum flows on to the surface of the skin through the pores. As the sebum flows through the pore it gets rid of dead skin cells from the lining of the pores.

Acne occurs when an excess of sebum is made. The excess sebum mixes with the dead skin cells from the lining of the pore and forms a "plug". This plug blocks the pore. None of the sebum and dead skin cells that are still being produced can escape from the pore. This builds up and results in a pimple.

## **WHAT CAUSES ACNE?**

**THE EXACT CAUSE OF ACNE IS UNKNOWN. ACNE IS **NOT** CAUSED BY DIRTY SKIN AND ACNE IS **NOT** A PROBLEM SUFFERED ONLY BY TEENAGERS.**

There is no medical evidence that food causes acne, not even eating chocolate or drinking cola. Following a diet will not clear your acne by itself. On the other hand, some people find that their acne seems to get worse when they eat certain foods like chocolates, fried food and chillies. If you find that this is the case you should avoid the foods that appear to make your acne worse.

One idea about the cause of acne is that as the changes due to puberty occur, the skin of an acne prone person reacts to these changes by making excess sebum. This extra sebum causes a plug to form, blocking the pore and resulting in the development of a pimple. When this occurs in several places at the same time, the result is acne.

Emotional stress, fatigue and cosmetics can make acne worse.

Acne most commonly first appears at the beginning of puberty when the production of hormones (called androgens) is increased. The sebaceous glands also become more active at this time. Many people outgrow acne when they reach adulthood, as the sebaceous glands settle into a normal cycle. Some people never outgrow acne and they may be bothered by it their whole lives.

Sometimes women tend to break out in a pattern that follows the course of their menstrual cycle.

Family history is a factor in determining if you will get acne. If one or both of your parents had acne, chances are that you may also get acne.

Outside factors can affect acne, either causing acne or make existing acne worse. Grease and oils or the use of some cosmetics and hair products can cause or irritate acne. Besides being irritants these products can act like sebum and block pores.

If you find that you break out with acne around the hairline, at the temples and in front of your ears, your hair products may be to blame. For instance, the shampoo you use, or the hair gel you use or your hairspray may be blocking your pores. Another area that can be affected by outside factors is the jaw line. Break outs in this area can be the result of resting your head in your hand or even resting the telephone on your shoulder for long periods of time.

Although acne is not caused by dirt, it is helpful to keep the face clean. Gentle cleansing twice daily can help by cutting down on the amount of common bacteria on the skin, and by reducing the amount of other materials on the skin that can also act like sebum and contribute to the blocking of the pores. This cleansing can be accomplished by washing the face twice daily with warm (not hot) water and a mild antibacterial soap. Your fingers are actually the best washcloth you can use. If you do use a facecloth, be gentle. Scrubbing irritates pimples already present and can increase inflammation, it can also contribute to the formation of cysts.

## TYPES OF ACNE

This section provides some technical information about types of acne and it should be very useful for anyone wanting to learn more about acne. You could also visit our website at [www.oratane.co.nz](http://www.oratane.co.nz) or the dermatological website [www.dermnet.org.nz](http://www.dermnet.org.nz) for more information.

The technical term for a pimple is “comedone”.

A “closed comedone” is one in which the contents of the pore have not escaped from the skin and are attacked by a bacteria. The bacteria is called *Propionibacterium acnes*, these bacteria are normally found on the skin. The result of the bacteria attacking the pore is inflammation.

A blackhead is a pimple that is open to the air. The pore opening has expanded, or dilated, to allow the plug of sebum and skin cells to move to the top of the pore. The exposure to the air causes a component of the contents of the pimple, called melanin, to turn dark.

A pustule, or whitehead, forms when the pore opening remains closed and bacteria accumulates, this is a closed comedone.

Cystic acne is the most severe type of acne. It occurs when material from the pimple escapes from the pore under the skin. Swelling and pain occur as the body's defence systems send bacteria-fighting white cells to the area in response. Cystic acne can result in scarring. A doctor's care is required to treat this type of acne. A doctor will treat the acne in order to reduce inflammation and to try to reduce the possibility of scarring.

Cystic acne can occur on its own, sometimes it can be the result of “picking” at existing pimples. The pressure of squeezing a pimple can cause the contents of the pimple to escape from the pore under the skin, resulting in a cyst.

# CONFIRMATION OF RECEIPT OF INFORMATION ON THE TREATMENT OF SEVERE ACNE WITH ORATANE® (isotretinoin)

## Female Patients

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I understand that I must not be pregnant in order to start this medicine. I understand that I must not become pregnant while being treated with Oratane and for **one month** after the end of Oratane treatment.

I understand the risks associated with becoming pregnant while on Oratane as explained by my dermatologist. I am aware that significant harm may be caused to my unborn baby should it be exposed to Oratane during pregnancy.

As a precaution I agree to undergo a pregnancy test if necessary and have my doctor confirm that I am not pregnant immediately before starting treatment with Oratane.

I am aware that methods to avoid pregnancy are absolutely essential during my treatment on Oratane. The safest option is an oral contraceptive plus a barrier. If there is any risk that pregnancy may have occurred, I agree to consult my specialist or GP to discuss the need for emergency contraception.

I agree to avoid the possibility of pregnancy for **one month before** commencing treatment with Oratane, **during the whole** period of treatment and for **one month after** completion of treatment. Should I become pregnant, I agree to inform my doctor immediately.

## All Patients

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I understand that I must not give Oratane to any other person.

I understand that while Oratane may help my skin, it may cause a number of side effects that have been explained to me.

I understand that this medicine may give rise to mood changes. I agree to inform my doctor immediately if I start to feel unhappy or depressed on this medicine.

I confirm that I have been fully informed of the above by:

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Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient or Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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