

ACNE TREATMENT ALTERNATIVES

If you have been treated with oral antibiotics for over a year and your acne is not better, you may want to consider some other treatment options that are available. This handout is appropriate for people who have used their surface and oral treatments consistently and have not improved or whose antibiotic therapy has to be continued indefinitely to have fairly clear skin. The idea behind these alternatives is to eliminate long term antibiotic therapy from your regimen.

1. Isotretinoin (Accutane)

This drug is highly effective for intense cystic acne with scarring. It has a significant side effect profile (birth defects, depression) and requires laboratory monitoring. Its cost is covered by health insurance.

2. Chemical Peels is the application of varying strengths of chemicals applied to the skin. This procedure removes the damaged layer of surface cells revealing fresh skin and stimulating cell rebuilding and restructuring of deeper skin layers. It is indicated for patients who want to improve the appearance of fine lines, wrinkles, sun damage, pigmentary irregularities, acne and acne scarring or just to brighten the skin. This procedure can help the skin appear smoother, healthier, plumper and tighter, with more even pigmentation.

3. BLU-U Light Treatment

BLU-U is a light source that targets the bacteria that are associated with acne. The light is not associated with skin cancer and is painless. Eight treatments are given over a four week period. Improvement is gradual and lasts for 9-12 months.

4. Photodynamic Therapy (PDT)

PDT combines a surface chemical applied to the skin for 1 hour and a BLU-U treatment. The chemical (levulan) is taken up by the sebaceous glands which play an important role in causing acne. The treatment safely shrinks the sebaceous glands and targets the bacteria that are associated with acne (using the same mechanism as #3 above). There is some mild discomfort when the light is administered and some mild stinging for 12-24 hours. For 2 days patients are sensitive to sunlight and have to be careful. The results are very impressive, rivaling isotretinoin (Accutane). The skin remodels and has better tone and is much less oily. Scarring and pigmentation spots are generally much improved. Three treatments over a 3 month period are recommended for the best results.