

## DRUGS USED TO TREAT ACNE

Drug	Adverse Effects	Comments
<b>Topical antibacterial</b>		
Benzoyl peroxide 2.5%, 5%, and 10% gel, lotion, or wash	Dry skin Possible bleaching of clothing and hair Allergic reactions (rarely)	Excellent antibacterial with very low to no development of resistance Should be used in all patients if tolerated Gel product usually preferred
Benzoyl peroxide/ erythromycin		Must be kept refrigerated
Benzoyl peroxide/ clindamycin		—
Clindamycin 1% gel or lotion	Diarrhea (rarely)	Should be avoided in patients with inflammatory bowel disease
Erythromycin 1.5 to 2% (multiple vehicles)	—	Well tolerated, but frequent development of bacterial resistance
<b>Topical comedolytic and exfoliant</b>		
Tretinoin (0.025%, 0.05%, and 0.1% cream; 0.05% liquid; 0.025% and 0.1% gel)	Skin irritation Increased sun sensitivity	Should start with 0.025% and, if ineffective, should increase the strength; if irritation occurs, should reduce strength, frequency, or both When tretinoin is started, appar- ent worsening of acne, with improvement possibly taking 3 to 4 wk to occur Requires use of protective clothing and sunscreen Should be avoided during pregnancy
Tazarotene 0.05% or 0.1% cream or gel	Skin irritation Increased sun sensitivity	When tazarotene is started, apparent worsening of acne, with improvement possibly taking 3 to 4 wk to occur Requires use of protective clothing and sunscreen Should be avoided during pregnancy
Adapalene 0.1% gel	Some redness, burning, and increased sun sensitivity	As effective as tretinoin but less irritating Requires use of protective cloth- ing and sunscreen
Azelaic acid 20% cream	Possible lightening of skin	Minimally irritating May be used by itself or with tretinoin Should be used cautiously in people with darker skin because of skin-lightening effects

**DRUGS USED TO TREAT ACNE—Continued**

Drug	Adverse Effects	Comments
Glycolic acid 5–10% cream, lotion, or solution	Stinging Mild irritation	OTC product, which may be used as adjunct therapy
Salicylic acid in propylene glycol 1–2% in wash, peel, mask, or lotion	Stinging Mild irritation.	OTC product, which may be used as adjunct therapy
<b>Oral antibiotic</b>		
Tetracycline 250–500 mg bid	Increased sun sensitivity	Inexpensive and safe, but must be taken on an empty stomach Requires use of protective clothing and sunscreen
Doxycycline 50–100 mg bid	Increased sun sensitivity	Good first-line drug in terms of efficacy and cost Requires use of protective clothing and sunscreen
Minocycline 50–100 mg bid	Headache Dizziness Skin discoloration	Most effective antibiotic but is expensive
Erythromycin 250–500 mg bid	Stomach upset	Frequent bacterial resistance develops
<b>Oral retinoid</b>		
Isotretinoin 1–2 mg/kg once/day for 16–20 wk	Possible harm to a developing fetus Possible effect on blood cells, the liver, and fat (triglyceride and cholesterol) levels Dry eyes, chapped lips, drying of the mucous membranes Pain or stiffness of large joints and lower back with high dosages Associated with depression, suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, and (rarely) completed suicide	For sexually active women, requires a pregnancy test before the start of therapy with isotretinoin and at monthly intervals during use of the drug plus use of 2 forms of contraception or sexual abstinence, beginning 1 mo before the drug is started, continued during drug use, and for 1 mo after stopping the drug Requires blood tests to check for effect on blood cells, the liver, and fat levels