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Treating Acne with Spironolactone

Hormonal changes

Hormonal factors can cause acne in women. Treatments like the birth control pill and/or Spironolactone can be very effective in these cases. Benefits may be observed after a period of one to three months with dosages ranging from 25 to 200 mg per day.

Spironolactone, also named aldactone, is an “anti-androgen therapy” (meaning that it blocks the influence of male hormones on the skin). In appropriate female patients it may have great benefit for treating acne and even for reducing unwanted facial hair growth. In higher doses, Spironolactone is an anti-hypertension medication. It rarely affects the blood pressure of individuals with normal blood pressure. Spironolactone is a safe and effective therapy for acne if used under MD supervision.

When taking Spironolactone:

- Drink plenty of water in order to counteract the diuretic effect of the pill
- Notify your doctor(s) of any personal history of high or low blood pressure or kidney problems
- Avoid salt substitutes or excess consumption of other products that are high in potassium (like bananas, sports drinks and some sodas). High levels of the potassium in your blood can trigger symptoms of thirst, weakness, headaches, and even heartbeat irregularities (palpitations).
- Use strict birth control precautions to avoid fetal abnormalities and notify your MD immediately should you plan to get pregnant or become pregnant
- Be evaluated by the dermatologist every two or three month to evaluate your progress and monitor for potential side effects
- Be prepared to have blood pressure measurements and periodic blood tests for your potassium level during treatment with the medication

Common initial side effects of Spironolactone which tend to resolve include:

- Lightheadedness caused by slightly lowered blood pressure
- Slight menstrual irregularity/spotting between menses (especially if one is not on birth control pills)
- Breast tenderness
- Increased frequency of urination (because it is a mild diuretic)