As the most common skin disease, acne will affect most people at some point in their life — especially during the teen years or young adulthood. An estimated 80 percent of people ages 11 to 30 have had some form of acne. Acne is common early in life largely due to hormonal changes. It also can occur later in life due to the environment, menstrual cycles, birth control pills, oil-based products, some medications or even due to stress.

What causes acne?
In a word, clogging. Your body’s sebaceous glands secrete a lubricating oily matter called sebum, which sometimes doesn’t reach its destination on the skin’s surface. Instead, it can wind up stuck in your tiny pores or hair follicles, leading to acne. Bacteria and dead skin also are well-known culprits that can block sebum and cause acne. Those blockages can cause acne problems ranging from blackheads and pimples to pustules and cystic acne.

What causes acne scars?
If you have deeper acne lesions — usually resulting in papules, pustules and cysts — your body will attempt to repair them by forming new collagen fibers. Unfortunately, these repairs generally aren’t as smooth and flawless as the original skin, causing acne scarring. Another type of acne scarring results from the loss of tissue, causing either “icepick” scars — small, but obvious holes in the skin — or “boxcar” scars — those round or oval depressions that look similar to chickenpox scars. Picking at or manipulating acne lesions can also increase the chance of scarring.

Why repair acne scars?
Studies have shown that people with acne scars can suffer physically, emotionally and socially. Likewise, those who have received successful treatment enjoy an improved appearance, enhanced self-esteem and promotion of better skin health.
What are the treatment options?
Some options for treating mild acne scarring include:

**Chemical peels** remove the outer layer of old skin by using a special chemical solution. The new skin that replaces the old skin is usually smoother and less scarred.

**Microdermabrasion** applies tiny rough particles from a special machine to remove the uppermost layer of skin.

The appearance of moderate to severe acne scars can benefit from the following procedures:

**Dermabrasion** is the surgical sanding or planing of the outer layer of skin on acne scars.

**Excision and punch replacement graft** involves cutting into the skin to remove the acne scar and then stitching the wound. In punch replacement grafting, the scar is removed with a special tool, and a skin graft – usually taken from behind the ear – fills the wound.

**Microneedling** is a procedure that uses small needles to create controlled microinjury to the skin. This helps to stimulate the body’s own collagen production and smooth acne scarring.

**Laser/light therapy** uses an intense but gentle beam of light that treats the acne without damaging surrounding tissue. It generally works best when combined with other acne treatments.

**Laser resurfacing** uses a laser to remove the scarred upper layers of skin and encourage new healthy collagen to grow in its place.

**Soft-tissue fillers** improve the skin’s appearance by injecting a filler directly into the acne scar.

**Subcision** is a simple, low-cost solution to severe acne scarring whereby a needle is used to break apart the fibrous bands of tissue that prevent the skin from laying in its natural position.

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