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If you have it, you likely know it. Cystic acne not only causes deep-seated scars on your face, but internal scars as well since many who have the skin disorder suffer from emotional distress. In fact "it is associated with long-term psychological issues including low self-esteem and depression," says West Palm Beach, FL, dermatologist Kenneth Beer, MD.

However, there is no reason to throw in the towel. There are treatment options available and it is possible to get rid of cystic acne for good. You just have to know the right techniques. First it's important to know that while cystic acne is a *type* of acne, it can't be treated in the same way as blackheads and whiteheads. **"[It] affects deeper skin tissue than common acne," says San Diego, CA, dermatologist Susan Stuart, MD.**

So while regular acne can be managed with topical medications, cystic acne can not, advises Dr. Beer. Due to the fact that cystic acne is usually a result of hormones, birth control pills are often recommended by dermatologists as a way to fight the problem. Other internal medication can be used as well. Antibiotics help to kill bacteria and reduce inflammation, says Dr. Stuart.

Isotretinoin, the active ingredient in the drugs Accutane and Claravis, is also typically prescribed for patients suffering from this type of acne. **Your dermatologist may also treat it with procedures that can be performed during an office visit, says Dr. Stuart. She recommends:**

Lasers and other light therapies: These devices reduce the p. acne bacteria (the cause of acne). Your dermatologist can determine whether this type of treatment can be helpful.

Chemical peels: Dermatologists use chemical peels to treat 2 types of acne—blackheads and papules.

Acne removal: Your dermatologist may perform a procedure called “drainage and extraction” to remove a large acne cyst. This procedure helps when the cyst does not respond to medicine. It also helps ease the pain and the chance that the cyst will leave a scar. If you absolutely have to get rid of a cyst quickly, your dermatologist may inject the cyst with medicine.

If you're at home and have a painful cyst, but can't get to your dermatologist's office right away, Dr. Stuart says to apply a hot compress on your cystic acne. "The heat will help to pull pus out from beneath the skin's surface. It will also reduce swelling and help your cystic acne to be less noticeable. You can simply soak a washcloth in hot water and hold it on the affected area for approximately 10 minutes," she says.

Remember, when dealing with this type of acne, you have options, so visit your dermatologist and keep up the good fight.

