

# British Skin Foundation

PRESS RELEASE

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## New survey aims to reveal if acne is part of growing up or a cause of silent misery for millions

For immediate release

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A new survey has been launched this week by the British Skin Foundation (BSF) which looks at the impact that acne has on sufferers in the UK.

The national skin disease research charity is keen to uncover the scale of the issue and whether those living with the condition, regardless of age or sex, could benefit from more advice, support and guidance than is currently available.

Bevis Man, spokesperson for the British Skin Foundation says: “Judging from the emails and phone calls we get, we know there are a large number of people out there who are deeply affected by acne, yet don’t always have an obvious person or place to turn to about it. For some, simply being able to talk about their acne can be as important as treating the physical symptoms for it.”

Acne is believed to affect as many as eight in ten individuals aged between 11 and 30 in the UK, and is most common between the ages of 14 and 17 in girls, and between 16 and 19 in boys. For a small minority – about 5% of women and 1% of men – acne can continue into adulthood. An earlier study showed how acne impacted on the mental health of 14 to 16 years olds in the UK. It was found that girls in particular had higher levels of emotional and behavioural difficulties. However, less than a third of participants had sought help from a doctor, with boys less likely to talk to friends and family about their acne.<sup>1</sup>

The emotional impact of skin diseases was highlighted in July 2012 following a previous survey by the British Skin Foundation which revealed the extent in which people with skin disease were being affected in the long-term. 878 people were asked a series of questions covering various aspects of their life such as work, their social lives, relations with family and sexual relations. Close to half of those who participated had been verbally abused at least once by a member of the public, whilst a further one in six (17%) people admitted to self-harming as a result of their skin. Disturbingly, 13 people said they had attempted suicide, with another third of respondents stating they had contemplated suicide at some stage.

Asked to rank what they felt were the top three areas affected by their skin condition, two thirds (66%) said a fall in self-confidence was their biggest issue and more than half (56%) said making friends was a major problem. One in five participants (101 people) who answered a question about relationships said their skin disease was the driving factor for the breakdown of their most recent relationship or a previous one.

Although these findings are not specific to acne but numerous skin diseases, they offer a grim indication of the far-reaching emotional implications a skin disease can have on the sufferer. Man continues: “Considering how common acne is, it’s staggering that there isn’t an organisation that represents a unified voice for people living with the condition.

Although not every case of acne is severe, it's fair to say that being quite a visual condition; it can at the very least impact on a person's self-confidence. It's important we establish just how bad the situation is in the UK, if at all, before taking steps to see how best we can help deal with the problem."

Dr Bav Shergill, a spokesperson for the British Skin Foundation and a consultant dermatologist at Brighton and Sussex Universities Hospitals NHS Trust says: "Patients with acne and many other skin diseases often feel enormously upset about their skin condition, as it affects their confidence and self-esteem in so many different ways. All too often the impact of skin disease is underestimated, and this survey will hopefully help draw attention to this fact."

**To take part in the acne survey, visit: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/RSRTPJY](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RSRTPJY)**

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**For more information about the survey contact Bevis Man, Communications Manager at the British Skin Foundation. T: 0207 391 6347 E: [bevis@britishskinfoundation.org.uk](mailto:bevis@britishskinfoundation.org.uk) W: [www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk](http://www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk)**

The British Skin Foundation (BSF) is a charity committed to raising funds for skin disease research. 100% of the money raised for the charity goes back into funding vital research. Over the last four years, the BSF has awarded in excess of £2,700,000 to numerous studies, £1.8 million of which has been dedicated to research into the various types of skin cancer.

<sup>1</sup>**Study details:** British Journal of Dermatology August 2001, Volume 145, issue 2, p274-279, "Acne prevalence, knowledge about acne and psychological morbidity in mid-adolescence: a community-based study" A. Smithard, C. Glazebrook, H. Williams\* DOI: 10.1046/j.1365-2133.2001.04346.x

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