Acne vulgaris, also known as common acne, is an inflammatory condition of the sebaceous glands of the skin. It consists of red, elevated areas on the skin that may develop into pustules and even further into cysts that can cause scarring. Acne vulgaris occurs mostly on the face, neck, and back of most commonly teenagers and to a lesser extent of young adults. The condition results in part from excessive stimulation of the skin by androgens (male hormones). Bacterial infection of the skin also appears to play a role. Symptoms Acne is a skin condition characterised by pimples, which may be closed (sometimes called pustules or "whiteheads") or open (blackheads), on the face, neck, chest, back, and shoulders. Most acne is mild, although some people experience inflammation with larger cysts, which may result in scarring. Holistic Options Acupuncture may be helpful in the treatment of acne. A few preliminary studies have reported that a series of acupuncture treatments (8 to 15) is markedly effective or curative in 90 to 98% of patients.1, 2, 3 Besides traditional Chinese acupuncture using needles alone, a technique called "cupping" is frequently used in the treatment of acne. Cupping refers to the use of cup-shaped instruments to apply suction to the area being needled. Two preliminary trials of cupping treatment for acne reported marked improvement in 91 to 96% of the study participants.4, 5 Controlled trials are necessary to determine the true efficacy of acupuncture and other traditional Chinese therapies in the treatment of acne. Some hypnotherapists believe that hypnosis might help prevent facial scarring associated with acne. In one case study, a patient was instructed to say the word "scar" in place of picking her face, and the scratch marks resolved. The underlying acne was unaffected.6