

Is acne a disease of Western civilization? This question has been asked by an international group of epidemiologists, community medicine specialists, and anthropologists.^[1] They aver that acne vulgaris is a nearly universal skin disease afflicting 79–95% of the adolescent population in westernized societies.^[1] Their explanation is diet, more specifically, glycemic diet. They base this hypothesis on the observation that primitive societies that subsist on traditional (low glycemic) diets have no acne.^[1] This awaits validation and acceptance by the dermatological community. Prevalence data are available from EU, USA, Australia, and New Zealand. Acne affects 80% of individuals between puberty and 30 years of age.^[2] It was also recorded in 54% of women and 40% of men over 25 years of age.^[3] Other studies have reported acne in 28–61% of school children in the age group 10–12 years; 79–95% in the age group 16–18 years; and even in children in the age group 4–7 years.^[4-6] In India, prevalence data from a dermatology clinic in a teaching hospital in Varanasi reported acne in 50.6% of boys and 38.13% of girls in the age group 12–17 years.^[7] There are believed to be no gender differences in acne prevalence,

although such difference are often reported and, very likely, represent social biases. In clinics in the urban areas, there is a clear preponderance of girls seeking treatment. There is also a perception that acne is less prevalent in rural population. This is supported by the data from Varanasi where 21.35% of boys (13–18 years) from rural areas had acne versus 37.5% from the urban areas.^[7]

REFERENCES

1. Cordain L, Lindeberg S, Hurtado M, Hill K, Eaton Bbrand-Miller J. Acne vulgaris: A disease of western civilization. *Arch Dermatol* 2002;138:1584-90.
2. Cunliffe WJ, Gould DJ. Prevalence of facial acne vulgaris in late adolescence and in adults. *Br Med J* 1979;1:1109-10.
3. Goulden V, Stables GI, Cunliffe WJ. Prevalence of facial acne in adults. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 1999;41:577-80.
4. Rademaker M, Garioch JJ, Simpson NB. Acne in schoolchildren: No longer a concern for dermatologists. *BMJ* 1989;298:1217-9.
5. Kilkenny M, Merlin K, Plunkett A, Marks R. The prevalence of common skin conditions in Australian school children, III: Acne vulgaris. *Br J Dermatol* 1998;139:840-5.
6. Lello J, Pearl A, Arroll B, Yallop J, Birchall NM. Prevalence of acne vulgaris in Auckland senior high school students. *N Z Med J* 1995;108:287-9.
7. Pandey SS. Epidemiology of acne vulgaris (Thesis abstract VII). *Indian J Dermatol* 1983;28:109-10.