Mild
Mostly blackheads and whiteheads
Benzoyl peroxide
Tretinoin/Adapalene

Mostly blackheads and whiteheads with scattered papules and pustules
Benzoyl peroxide +/- Topical clindamycin
Tretinoin/Adapalene

Moderate
Mostly papules and pustules with some blackheads and/or whiteheads. Minimal scarring*
Benzoyl peroxide
Tretinoin/Adapalene
Oral Doxycycline for 3-4 months

Severe
Nodules and cysts +/- scarring* OR numerous papules and pustules with notable scarring.
Benzoyl peroxide
Tretinoin/Adapalene
Oral Doxycycline for 3-4 months
Schedule Dermatology appointment

Isotretinoin

Scarring is a texture change. Post-inflammatory hyper/hypopigmentation (PIH) is the color change (i.e. dark or light spots). PIH will resolve with time, but scarring is difficult to treat and is why isotretinoin should be started in a timely manner.

For most insurance plans to cover isotretinoin the following medications must have failed first: topical retinoids, topical antibiotics and/or benzoyl peroxide, and oral antibiotics.