

How to Get Rid of Acne Scars With Different Treatments

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By Cheryl Kramer Kaye

What Causes Acne?

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Before we tackle the acne aftermath, it's important to understand what causes acne in the first place. "Acne occurs when your sebaceous glands become plugged with oil and dead skin cells," explains David Bank, MD, a dermatologist in Mt. Kisco, NY. And unfortunately for our skin, there are many different causes.



Heredity

Blame your parents! "Acne has a genetic component," says Dr. Bank. "If your parents had or have severe acne, there is an increased chance you will, too."

Sex Hormones (Testosterone, Estrogen, and Progesterone)

You'll see big swings in your skin—and sometimes a surge in acne—during what Manjula Jegasothy, MD, a dermatologist in Miami, FL, calls hormonal "flux periods"—puberty, pregnancies, and menopause. And that monthly breakout isn't a myth: "Hormones increase oil production in the skin," says New York, NY-based dermatologist, Kristina Goldenberg, MD. "This causes an increase in growth of bacteria and inflammation, resulting in acne." When that pore ruptures beneath the skin? That's what causes cystic acne, those tender, "underground" zits that take forever to go away and lead to acne scarring more often than other pimples.

Stress Hormones (Cortisol)

Why does a pimple always seem to show up when your life already feels kinda crazy? "High stress levels lead to the release of a hormone known as cortisol," says **Dr. Goldenberg**. "High levels of cortisol will produce more acne."

Diet

While it's hard to pinpoint specific foods that cause acne, "a high glycemic diet causes spikes in blood sugar levels that will stimulate the release of certain growth factors that in turn lead to increased oil production and acne," says **Dr. Goldenberg**. In a nutshell: Too much sugar and processed grains can mess with your skin.

Pore-Clogging Products

You've seen the words "non-comedogenic" on product packaging, and know that it means that it won't clog your pores. But the products you put on your face that don't say that—typically ones with heavy oils—can clog pores and create pimples. And never sleep in your makeup; the pressure of your face in your pillow in addition to makeup can earn you a pimple overnight.

Best 3 DIY Home Remedies for Acne Scars

Using ingredients from your pantry or fridge can literally restore your "fresh"-faced glow, and DIY remedies can be gentle on both your skin and your wallet. How to get rid of acne scars naturally? Read on.

Lemon Juice

A squeeze of lemon for your tea... and your T-zone! According to Dr. Bank, "lemon juice contains vitamin C that may help to stimulate collagen and improve post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation," also known as brown spots.

Mix equal parts lemon juice and water in a bowl. Use a cotton swab to apply the mixture directly to the dark spot, so as not to irritate the surrounding skin. Leave on for 10 minutes, then rinse. Treat once daily.

Turmeric

Boost your lemon juice by adding turmeric into the mix. "Turmeric contains antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties that help acne lesions resolve quicker and scars to fade faster," says **Dr. Goldenberg**.

Mix equal parts turmeric powder and lemon juice to create a paste. Use a cotton swab to apply the paste to brown or red marks for 10-20 minutes, then rinse. Use once daily.

Honey

"Honey has antibacterial properties and may help eliminate P. Acnes [a bacteria linked to acne] if applied to the face as a mask," says Dr. Goldberg. Honey is also known as an anti-inflammatory, so it can help reduce the inflammation that's making a brown or red scar stick around.

Keep this mask simple! Apply 3 tbs of raw honey to clean skin. Leave on for 10-20 minutes, then rinse.

Best 5 Products to Banish Acne Scars

We asked our top docs how to get rid of acne scars fast, and they shared the key ingredients—and their favorite formulas—for faster fading.

1. Specific Beauty Accelerated Dark Spot Corrector

This targeted treatment contains hydroquinone, which Dr. Bank calls, “the gold standard for fading hyperpigmentation.” The formula contains 2% HQ, the maximum for an OTC formulation (prescription formulations are 4% or higher).

- It's used as a 7-14 regimen booster
- Part of a skin-brightening kit that enhances all-over radiance in addition to lightening individual spots.

2. Differin Gel (Adapalene 0.1%) Acne Treatment

Differin used to be available only by prescription, but now it's available over the counter. The active ingredient is retinol, which “topically helps to remodel collagen to help improve scars, as well as even out pigmentation,” according to Dr. Bank. Differin is a proven acne-fighter, so it helps prevent and treat acne while improving the appearance of acne scars!

- Not a spot-treatment; should be applied all over the face, once per day. Can be used morning or night (whereas most retinols should be used at night only).
- Use along with moisturizer to prevent irritation.

3. Garnier Skinactive Clearly Brighter Dark Spot Corrector

Dr. Jegasothy recommends this intensive treatment that feature the double-whammy of vitamins C and E, two antioxidants known to improve red marks left behind by acne. It also adds gentle exfoliating acids to speed cell turnover for faster results.

- A little goes a long way; just use a dime-size amount for your face and neck.
- Apply twice daily.

4. Tula Dual-Phase Skin Reviving Treatment Pad

These peel pads are both anti-acne and anti-acne scars. “Salicylic acid is anti-inflammatory,” says Dr. Bank, “which brightens skin and promotes skin cell turnover and may help reduce breakouts.” In these pads, it's paired with lactic acid, a gently skin exfoliant and hydrator, and probiotics, those good-for-you bacteria that help balance the skin and reduce inflammation.

- Has active ingredients on one side, exfoliating plant fibers on the other.
- Use 1-2 times per week for two minutes.
- Leaves skin feeling softer and looking smoother instantly.

5. It Cosmetics CC+ Cream

“Sunscreen is imperative to protect newly-forming skin and is a must when trying to heal scars,” says Dr. Bank. This [daily moisturizer](#) protects your skin with broad-spectrum SPF 50 in a seriously hydrating formula. But best of all, it offers color-correcting pigments that cover red and dark spots while they’re healing.

- Apply evenly with a synthetic foundation brush.
- Comes a range of five shades, from fair to rich.

Best In-Office Treatments for Acne Scars

The best way to get rid of acne scars is at the dermatologist, who will have tools and treatments you just can’t get your hands on at home!

Chemical Peels

“Chemical peels work well for the red or brown pigmentations on the skin,” explains [Dr. Goldenberg](#), “since they peel off dead and discolored skin and help even out skin tone.” Dr. Bank recommends stronger chemical peels like retinol or TCA peels, which can help to deeply exfoliate skin and stimulate collagen, but cautions that “care must be taken with these peels because they can cause hyperpigmentation in darker skin tones.”

Lasers

Laser can help improve many different types of scars, from redness and hyperpigmentation to deep, pitted scars.

Dr. Bank sees fractional laser treatment as the best all-around laser therapy for acne scars. “Only a small portion of the skin is treated with laser energy while the rest of the skin is spared. This stimulates faster healing of the skin tissues and production of collagen.”

For brown or deep red scars, Dr. Bank likes intense pulsed light (IPL), in which “short pulses of micro-fine light to reach deep into the skin’s top layer.”

Subcision and Dermal Fillers

Some deeper scars leave an actual indentation in the skin, Dr. Jegasothy explains: “the surface of the skin is bound to the underlying dermis by a fibrous band, creating an indentation that is very difficult to lift.” The treatment for this type of scar involves cutting the fibrous band and then putting dermal filler, like Bellafill or Juvederm, underneath.