



Why You're Still Getting So Many Blackheads as an Adult

And what to finally do about it.

BY GRACE GOLD, November 2, 2015



If you've ever looked in a magnifying mirror, you've likely obsessed over a blackhead.

A type of acne lesion known as an “open comedone” by dermatologists, blackheads form when hair follicles or pores become clogged due to hormonal changes or certain ingredients in skin or hair products, says New York dermatologist Gary Goldenberg, M.D., medical director of Mount Sinai Dermatology Faculty Practice.

While it may be tempting to pick, push, or scrub the icky black bump out, experts say that's a big no-no that can just make the situation worse by damaging skin and making it more likely for you to get even more blackheads in the future. Instead, keep your hands off and follow this guide to safely saying goodbye to blackheads for good.

Choose the Right Face Wash

There are a few options you can try: Look for one containing either salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide in the drugstore, and use once to twice a day to exfoliate and keep pores from plugging. These two

ingredients also prevent blackheads—but the trick is to not wait until things come to the surface. You should continue to wash once to twice daily as part of a regular prevention routine. If your blackheads are resistant, a prescription retinoid from the dermatologist’s office should do the trick at treating and preventing the bumps, says Goldenberg. And as a bonus, you’ll enjoy anti-aging benefits, too.

Play with Peels—if You’re Curious

From **Biore Deep Cleansing Charcoal Pore Strips** (\$7, drugstore.com) to super cheapie **7th Heaven by Montagne-Jeuness masks** (\$2, ulta.com), lots of fun-to-tinker-with options abound on the market to suck blackheads up. Goldenberg says they work by peeling the superficial layer of skin to open up the comedones. However, just keep in mind that they tend to not be as effective as face washes and retinoids.

Visit a Pro

If you’re itching to have blackheads removed immediately, a dermatologist or licensed spa esthetician can do the deed. Either expert may use a professional extractor tool. Just remember: Even though beauty-supply stores may sell these tools, it’s dangerous for you to attempt to do it yourself because the possibility of scarring is too great and just not worth the risk.

Meanwhile, certain cosmetic procedures, like chemical peels that utilize exfoliating acids and the popular Clear + Brilliant Laser can help clear up blackheads while also giving skin an overall rejuvenating treatment that reveals more even tone, says Goldenberg. Choose either if you'd like to try a professional treatment.

Cut Out Causes

Heavy ingredients in skin-care products, as well as gummy filler in hair care that can travel to your skin when you sweat or spray are both notorious causes of blackheads, says Goldenberg. Makeup products like thick concealers and foundations may also be stealth offenders. If you notice a correlation between using certain products and blackheads popping up, stop using them.

The bottom line: Blackheads are stubborn. Successfully treating and preventing them takes consistent daily care with exfoliating ingredients—and which ones you use should depend on the severity of your case.