

# Jessica Alba Pops Her Pimples Too, So She's Even More Relatable Now

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Here's how to do it without leaving a scar.



Jessica Alba may look like she has flawless skin, but the actress and Honest Company founder says that's not always the case. Alba, 35, says in a new interview that she eats well and stays hydrated to have good skin, plus she avoids refined sugars and fried foods. However, she's human, and, like everyone else, she gets breakouts.

When Alba's skin decides to go rogue, she has a standard method of dealing with it. “When I wake up with a pimple, I immediately scream,” she joked to *People*, before sharing her zit-blasting remedy. First, she extracts any head at the top of the blemish, then she cleans the pimple with salicylic acid. Finally, she treats it with a blue-light system to help get rid of redness.

Minus the blue light, this probably sounds like your teenage go-to routine when zits pop up, but dermatologists aren't fans of trying the extraction part at home. Gary Goldenberg, M.D., medical director of the Dermatology Faculty Practice at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, tells SELF that whiteheads and blackheads can be extracted using a tool called a “comedone extractor”—a handled device with a hollow circle at the end.

However, he doesn't encourage people to grab a comedone extractor and go it alone. “If done incorrectly, the contents of the acne bump can go deeper into the skin, causing inflammation,” he says.

New York City dermatologist Doris Day, M.D., author of the upcoming book *Skinfluence*, agrees that it's not a good idea to try an at-home extraction, whether with a tool or with your fingers. “Your fingers are not surgical instruments,” she tells SELF. “Many times, even if you're using a tool, [trying to extract a pimple] creates more trauma, leading to a cascade of inflammation, which can lead to damage and scarring.”

This method can actually make a pimple last longer and make it recur in the same spot, she says, adding that it can even create a small scar that you won't see for years, until you age and the collagen in your skin breaks down. “It can take years and years to show,” Dr. Day says.

But let's be honest: It's not realistic to decide you'll never, ever pop a zit again, so we're with Alba on that one. But it's key to know how to do it with minimal risk of skin repercussions. “Some blackheads and pus pimples can be picked if you are very careful,” Joshua Zeichner, M.D., a New York City-based board-certified dermatologist and the director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at Mount Sinai Medical Center, tells SELF.

To do so, he recommends first cleaning your hands and fingers. Then, apply a very gentle downward pressure on either side of the pimple. “If the blockage comes out, then you are fine,” he says. “If you need to apply significant pressure and it is still not coming out, then you should hold off.”

If your pimple is painful or red or it seems to be big under the surface, don't try to pop it. “Inevitably, picking these types of zits will lead to more harm than good,” Dr. Zeichner says. “These deep zits do not have a connection to the skin surface and are not pickable.”

If you have one of those, experts recommend seeing your dermatologist. He or she can pop it for you or give you a cortisone injection, which will make it go away.

Of course, it's not always possible to see your doctor quickly, or you may not have the budget to pop in every time you have a zit. Still, you can try to speed up the healing process. First, steep a green or black tea bag for a couple of minutes, then lay it over the pimple. “That has caffeine and antioxidants in it that will change the inflammation,” Dr. Day says.

Then, Dr. Zeichner recommends using a combination therapy of salicylic acid and benzoyl peroxide, followed by 1 percent over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream. “This trifecta addresses all of the causes leading to acne,” he says. Salicylic acid helps unclog pores, while benzoyl peroxide helps kill acne-causing bacteria, he explains. The topical cortisone cream is like “[a fire extinguisher] that puts out inflammation,” Dr. Zeichner says.

Even with that treatment, you need to be patient. “We all want [pimples] gone yesterday,” Dr. Day says. “But you have to understand that it's going to take time.” She recommends treating the zit, covering it up with makeup if you like, and waiting for the whitehead or blackhead to slough off or be reabsorbed by your skin. “Either way is fine,” she says. “Your skin is handling it.”

If you see or feel a zit starting to form, Dr. Day recommends using salicylic acid on the area, followed by benzoyl peroxide. “Many times when you see a pimple, it’s on its way out,” she says. “The idea is to treat it before you see it.” You may have heard that alcohol wipes and hydrogen peroxide will help dry zits out, but Dr. Day says they do nothing for the bacteria in pimples.

And if you find that you have to combat zits regularly, Dr. Goldenberg says it’s time to visit a dermatologist for prevention tips and treatment. In addition to examining your skin, your doctor will likely talk about your diet and lifestyle habits to see if changing things up can have a positive impact on your skin.