

How to Get Rid of Blackheads for Good

It takes a bit of work—but it's worth it.

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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.

When blackheads sit on the surface of the skin and are open, exposed sebum is oxidized, prompting the pore to look black. And, no it's not because there's dirt on your skin or you're a dirty person either. Rest assured, that they're completely normal, and since shelves aren't short of blackhead-banishing products, you know you're not the only one with the prob.

If you're having a blackhead emergency and have no time to wait, you can cover those suckers up with some really great concealer, like the Bobbi Brown Creamy Concealer Kit (**Buy it:** \$37, [sephora.com](#)) using these tricks. But rather than attempting to hide them all the time, a smarter move is to treat your skin correctly, talk to a dermatologist if you need a bit more oomph, and play detective to get to the root cause of their appearance.

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. Two we love: the 2% salicylic acid **Clearasil Ultra Daily Face Wash** (\$8, cvs.com) and 10% benzoyl peroxide **Oxy Acne Medication Maximum Action Advanced Face Wash** (\$7, cvs.com).



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, try a retinoid, like **Differin Gel**, which contains the retinoid adapalene and is newly available over-the-counter (\$12, amazon.com). And as a bonus, you'll enjoy anti-aging benefits, too.



Play with Peels—If You're Curious

From **Philosophy The Microdelivery Detoxifying Oxygen Peel** (\$62, [sephora.com](https://www.sephora.com)) to budget buy **Biore Deep Cleansing Charcoal Pore Strips** (\$7, [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.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.