

Why You Keep Getting Zits in the Same Exact Place

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I used to think nothing was more annoying than acne. And then I experienced *reoccurring* acne—aka breakouts that seem to keep popping up in the same. damn. place. Whole new level of WTF annoying. And the reason why it happens is, of course, complicated, because there are so many possible causes for why your zits keep coming back in the same area.

But that's not to say there isn't an answer (or a treatment). So to help us all out, I've created a little guide organized by all the different places you might be dealing with recurring zits (chin/jaw, T-zone, forehead, scalp, shoulders, back, arms, and butt). Keep reading to find out the possible causes of your acne, how to treat your existing breakouts, and what you can do to stop them from happening ever again so you can have the clear skin of your dreams.

Recurring acne on your CHIN AND JAW

If your deep, painful cystic acne tends to return the same time and place each month, your hormones are likely to blame. **Hormones cause an increase in oil production and can lead to, you guessed it, acne**, which is why it's often referred to as *hormonal* acne. The reason yours might be coming back (and back, and back) is because this cystic type of acne (or blind pimple) is so difficult to treat in the first place since it's so much deeper than your average pimple. In other words, your topical spot treatments ain't gonna cut it here.

Instead of playing doctor yourself, consult your derm for help treating your hormonal acne. They can help determine whether the occasional cortisone injection or an internal treatment (like antibiotics, birth control, Accutane, or spironolactone) would be your best option. While you wait for an appointment, dermatologist Neal Schultz, MD, recommends applying a warm compress to your cystic acne to reduce the inflammation.

Then, stick a hydrocolloid patch on top to stop yourself from touching, picking, and even looking at it. It won't get rid of the zit, but it'll help prevent you from making it worse.

Recurring acne on your T-ZONE

I'd be willing to bet that your T-zone is one of your main areas of concern. Why? Simple: These areas tend to be oilier. As dermatologist Rachel Nazarian, MD, explains it, **the oily sebum your skin makes to lubricate itself collects and forms sebaceous filaments**, and when mixed with dead skin and dirt, can create clogged pores, blackheads, whiteheads, and even cysts.

Since your skin is constantly creating sebum (it's a natural part of your body, sry), it makes sense why your pores keep filling back up. So to help prevent breakouts from repeatedly forming in the same place, incorporate regular exfoliation into your routine with either a topical retinol treatment or an acid-based peel to keep pores clear over time.

Recurring acne on your FOREHEAD

If you're generally a sweaty person and it's summertime, you might notice a recurrence of breakouts in areas where that sweat tends to sit, like your forehead. And whether you're into sweatbands, hats, or bangs, **if you're constantly dabbing or messing with your forehead, you're creating the perfect environment for breakouts** by introducing bacteria and oils to your skin through fingers or dirty materials, says to dermatologist Mona Gohara, MD.

Instead, confront your sweaty summer acne breakouts by washing with a gentle face wash (no, I didn't say to mop it up with the back of your hand) to remove the sweat and bacteria, use a foundation for acne-prone skin, mattify with oil-blotting sheets, and use one of the gentle spot treatments below on any of your existing zits.

Recurring acne on your SCALP

Just like you can get acne on your face, you can also get breakouts on your scalp from the same causes (genes, hormones, and clogged pores). Fun. And just like your face, treating acne caused by genetics and hormones requires help from a professional. But according to trichologist Dominic Burg of Evolis Professional, if the cause of your scalp acne is clogged pores, the fix is pretty simple: **wash your hair with a pore-clearing shampoo to remove product buildup and dissolve gunk**. Try one of these shampoo formulas, which are free of sulfates but full of anti-inflammatory and zit-fighting ingredients.

Recurring acne on your CHEST

Other places where sweat can cause zits to repeatedly pop up? On your chest. Sports bras are notorious for trapping sweat against your skin, and dermatologist **Gary Goldenberg, MD**, says **not showering the first thing after sweatin' it up could be the source of your recurring chest acne**. Use an antibacterial body wash right after working out, or, if you just can't get to a shower ASAP, a body or face wipe will get you by until you can properly rinse off.

Recurring acne on your BACK/SHOULDERS

Yep, you guessed it. That beloved sports bra of yours is also often the culprit of back acne or bacne, which can be prevented by keeping your skin free of oil and sweat. But to make things even more complicated (because what is acne, if not annoying and complicated?), your shower could be one surprising cause of your recurring acne, too.

For some acne-prone people, **the moisturizing ingredients found in your haircare products can clog the pores on your back and shoulders** while you shampoo and condition. You don't have to sacrifice good hair for good

skin, though—just clip your hair up or wrap it in a towel while in the shower (yes, with the water still running), then rinse off your back and shoulders before stepping out. Keeping your damp, product-filled hair off your skin is key to preventing those breakouts. Then, use an acne-clearing body spray to treat hard-to-reach spots on your back.

Recurring acne on your ARMS

You know those tiny, rough, red bumps on the backs of your arms? Yeah, that's not acne. **It's actually called keratosis pilaris (KP), and it's the result of your body overproducing keratin in your hair follicles**, leading to bumps and inflammation, says Dr. Gohara. Annoyingly, KP is in your DNA, which means there's no cure for it.

But there *are* treatments that can help keep things under control: Every time you shower, rub your arms with a sulfur-based bar soap (sulfur breaks down keratin in your skin), alternating once a week with an acid-based body scrub. Then, after drying off, lotion with a gentle retinol-based body cream or AHA-based body cream to keep skin smooth. Need a few products recs? Say no more:

Recurring acne on your BUTT

Speaking of things that look like acne but actually aren't, **folliculitis (inflammation of the hair follicles) is more likely what you're experiencing when you notice hard little bumps on your butt**. The common culprits for causing folliculitis are—wait for it—sweaty workout clothes. Shock! Wow! As if I needed another reason to skip the gym, honestly.

According to dermatologist Morgan Rabach, MD, wet clothing, swimsuits, and leggings create friction against your skin, which can cause the inflamed little bumps. So to stop the "butt acne" from coming back, change out of your wet clothes immediately after sweating, and keep the skin on your backside clean and oil-free. If you already have the bumps and want to treat them, try an antibacterial wash and a chemical exfoliator to remove the buildup of dead skin.