

Men's Health

The Best Way to Pop a Pimple

Suzannah Weiss | November 2, 2017

You know you're not supposed to pop a pimple. But come on—who hasn't popped one once or twice? There's something too irresistible about squeezing a zit out of existence (and watching endless videos of people doing this).



Okay, so no, you *shouldn't* do it. But if you're going to pop a pimple anyway, how can you do it in a way that will minimize the damage?

First, do a pimple inventory: The only pimples you should pop are whiteheads or blackheads. “These are acne tissue that are almost ready to pop on their own,” dermatologist [William Kwan](#), M.D. explains. They gradually develop into red pimples, which are more prone to discoloration, infection, or tearing when popping, so it's better to catch them at this early stage. (You should also never pop a pimple in your face's triangle of death, either.)

But popping pimples at any stage runs these risks if you're not careful. To make the procedure easier on your skin, you can start prepping the night before by applying benzoyl peroxide (we like Neutrogena On-the-Spot Acne Treatment), salicylic acid, or glycolic acid, says Dr. Kwan. This will help calm down the pimple.

Once you're ready to pop the pimple, put an alcohol swab on the area to minimize the risk of infection, and use a warm compress to ease the pimple out, says dermatologist Kenneth Mark, M.D.

Then, apply even, firm pressure at the base, pushing it up and out rather than into your face. If it bursts under your skin, you could experience inflammation and more breakouts, Dr. Kwan explains. Another way to prevent this is to get a blackhead extractor, which you hold over the pimple and press down to drain it.

To speed up the healing process and prevent inflammation, you can put some witch hazel or another astringent on afterward, says Dr. Kwan.

All that said, resist the urge if you can. “If you do not perform it perfectly, you run the significant risk of causing additional inflammation, which makes the underlying problem worse and can lead to scarring,” says Dr. Mark. (Here's what you can do to get rid of your acne scars.)

Instead, the best way to be proactive about your pimples is to stop them from growing in the first place. Kwan recommends using a face wash and lotion with salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide (We like these face washes). If over-the-counter products don't work after 12 weeks, consult a dermatologist about getting a prescription.

<https://www.menshealth.com/health/how-to-pop-a-pimple>