

BEAUTY

Feel a Pimple Coming On? Top Dermatologist Reveals How *These* Stickers Can Make it Disappear Fast

Learn how they work and find the best ones for you

By Rachel Sokol | January 16, 2024

It seems like everything from our youth makes an eventual comeback, from fashion to music to ... acne?! That's right — if you think pimples were a thing of the past, think again. "Believe it or not, it's not uncommon for women age 50 and above to experience occasional pimples or breakouts," says **Navin S. Arora, DO, FAAD**, a board-certified dermatologist based in Garden City and Syosset, NY. Fortunately, unlike the Clearasil pads and Seabreeze we had at our disposal in the '80s, there's an easier fix for errant zits that pop up: pimple patches. How do pimple patches work? Top dermatologists explain the science behind the handy little stickers.



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What causes pimples for women over 40?

"Stress, medication side effects and underlying medical conditions can all contribute to acne in adults, regardless of age," says **Dr. Arora**. But hormonal fluctuations, especially during menopause, can also trigger acne in some women, "along with changes in skincare routines, increased sensitivity or the use of skincare products that may not be suitable." In other words, just because you're not in high school anymore doesn't mean a zit won't make an appearance on your face present day.

What are pimple patches?

"Pimple patches, also known as acne patches or hydrocolloid patches, work by creating a barrier over a pimple," explains **Dr. Arora**. "These patches, which can come in different sizes and shapes, are typically made of material that absorbs excess fluids from the pimple, including pus and oil. They create a moist environment, which can help speed up the natural healing process."

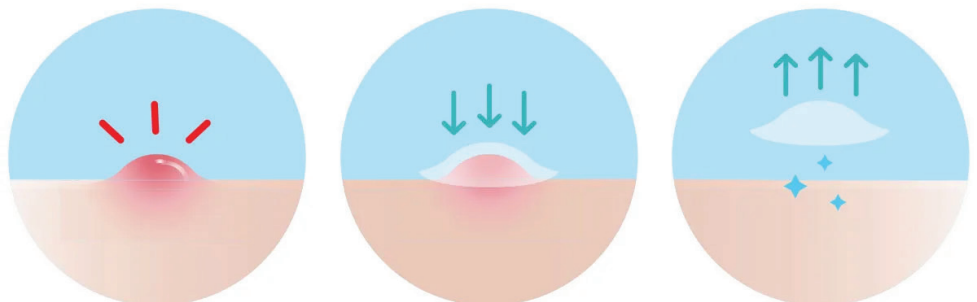
When you spot one of those buggers trying to break through your skin, simply cover it up with a pimple patch (follow the directions on the box) and it will hopefully shrink after a few hours/days, or break through to the surface for elimination.

How do pimple patches work?

What makes these patches popular, says **Dr. Arora**, is their quality hydrocolloid material, which effectively absorbs fluids from pimples. "Hydrocolloid is a superior wound healer that provides a warm environment and allows the wound to breathe and heal," says Rachel Lee Lozina, a licensed esthetician and founder of Blue Water Spa in Oyster Bay, NY. "Sebum is the oily substance the body produces to keep the skin moisturized. Sometimes acne needs to heal if the sebum's been evacuated from the pores." Additionally, some brands offer pimple patches with added ingredients like salicylic acid or tea tree oil for enhanced acne treatment.

Unlike drying topical medications and creams, Lozina adds: "I would say there aren't any 'cons' when trying a hydrocolloid pimple patch. It can only help with the healing of the pimple. However, it should be noted that salicylic acid and benzoyl peroxide can be very drying, which can irritate the pimple."

Some pimple patches may seem like they are marketed to teens, "but pimple patches can be effective for adults," adds **Dr. Arora**. "They are particularly useful for treating individual blemishes, as they can help reduce inflammation, minimize the appearance of the pimple and prevent you from picking or touching the affected area."



This diagram shows just how a pimple patch does its job. Mosterpiece/Getty

When is the best time to apply a pimple patch?

Dr. Arora says the best time to apply a pimple patch is when the pimple is just emerging. "This could be when you feel a slight bump, notice redness or see a small whitehead beginning to form." Applying a patch early can also help prevent scarring. Can pimple patches work on more severe acne?

It's essential to note that while pimple patches can provide relief for specific breakouts, **Dr. Arora** stresses they may not address the underlying causes of adult-onset acne, such as hormonal imbalances or skincare routines. According to Dr. Richard Bottiglione, a board-certified dermatologist in the Phoenix, Arizona area and founder of Dermatologist's Choice skincare products, "acne comes in various severities, ranging from superficial to deep cystic acne," he explains. "While topical treatments (applied directly to the body) work well for superficial acne, oral prescriptions are necessary for severe cases." For more severe cases of breakouts, he says, "many skincare products on the market use very mild ingredients that prove ineffective for treating acne. To achieve results, it's advisable to seek out products containing active ingredients, such as active, non-neutralized glycolic acid."

For addressing acne, Dr. Bottiglione recommends Dermatologist's Choice Glycolic Peel Cleansing Pads (Buy from Dermatologist's Choice, \$65), formulated with active, non-neutralized glycolic acid and salicylic acid, as well as Dermatologist's Choice Mild Acne Lotion (Buy from Dermatologist's Choice, \$25), which includes 3.5% benzoyl peroxide.

4 pimple patches to try

"Ultimately, the 'best' pimple patch varies from person to person," reminds **Dr. Arora**. "So, it's essential to consider your skin type, the severity of your acne and any specific ingredients you may prefer when choosing the right pimple patch for use." Here some we like:

1. Best pimple patch for a pimple already there

Mighty Patch

(Buy from Amazon, \$10.77)

"This is the most prevalent of all acne patches on the market," says Lozina. "You can find them virtually anywhere. They are easy to use and a good price." It's recommended you keep this clear patch on for 6 to 8 hours until it turns white, meaning it's time to remove.



2. Best pimple patch for "angry" pimples

Hanhoo Blemish Patches

(Buy from Walmart, \$8.55)

According to Lozina, these are hydrocolloid patches with salicylic acid, "which is really good for targeting very inflamed and angry pimples." It can penetrate deep into the cell wall and neutralize bacteria. "However," adds Lozina, "they can be irritating because of the salicylic acid, so use sparingly."

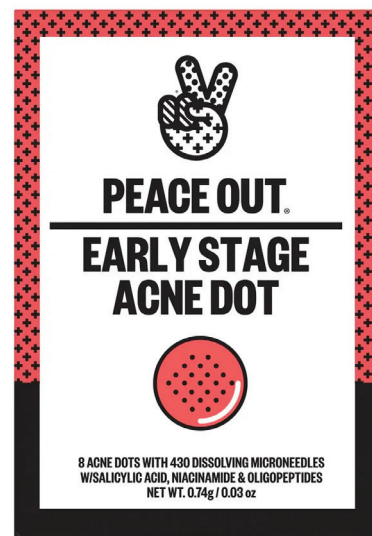


3. Best pimple patch for when you feel one coming on

Peace Out Early Stage Acne Dots

(Buy from Sephora, \$19)

Fight off that acne before it even comes to the surface with these early stage acne dots that contain 2% salicylic acid, plus niacinamide to fade dark spots and succinic acid to stabilize oil production. The patches are also made with dissolving microneedles that allow for deeper penetration for the ingredients to absorb into skin.



4. Best pimple patch for making pimple care fun

Starface Hydro-Stars Hydrocolloid Prime Patches

(Buy from CVS, \$11.99)

"These are not any better than the Mighty Patch," says Lozina, "but they come in fun colors and a star shape that allow you to make a bold statement and have a little fun with treating your acne."

