

ASK AN EXPERT

So You Popped That Pimple. Here's How to Help It Heal

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We've all had that annoying zit staring back at us in the mirror...and we can't help but pop it. At first, it may look better — but then it turns red and swollen and has us wishing we could go back in time and practice some self-control. “Discoloration — such as hyperpigmentation or residual redness — commonly occurs, with the potential for scarring. Popping can [also] create an entry site in the skin for bacteria to enter, resulting in an infection,” says [Navin Arora](#), DO, a board-certified dermatologist and founder of Borealis Dermatology.

If you've already popped it, here's what to do next.

How to heal a popped pimple

Start by treating it like you're caring for a scrape or other superficial skin wound. Arora recommends:

Clean the area

Use a gentle cleanser or antiseptic wipe to clean the area around the zit. Avoid harsh scrubs.

Apply an ointment

A simple bland ointment like Aquaphor or Vaseline works. But if it's more inflamed or pus comes out, you may want to use an OTC antibiotic ointment like Neosporin to prevent infection. Pro tip: If you need an emergency spot treatment, you can use some OTC hydrocortisone 1% cream to help reduce inflammation.

Cover the area

Arora suggests hydrocolloid pimple patches, since hydrocolloid absorbs drainage and helps the wound heal. One of his favorites: Hero Cosmetics Mighty Patch.

Avoid...

- Vaping and smoking cigarettes: Nicotine can slow down the healing process.
- Heavy makeup: It may have bacteria that could increase the risk of infection.
- AHA/BHAs: These chemical exfoliants could irritate the area.
- Picking your face: Don't touch the area or use blackhead extractors, since that can lead to more irritation or scarring.

Be patient

Arguably the hardest part. You could have redness or dyspigmentation for weeks — remember healing takes time.

Watch for infection

If you notice increased redness, swelling, or pus, reach out to a dermatologist.