

Women's Health

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What Causes Forehead Acne And How to Get Rid of It, According To Dermatologists



Oh, acne. No matter where it is—somewhere on your body or peppering your chin or forehead—it's an undeniable annoyance. And one that can be exceptionally hard to tackle once and for all, especially if you don't know the root cause of the issue. Is it hormones? A product you're using?

To help you banish those unsightly forehead bumps once and for all, we asked board-certified dermatologists to start at the very beginning, explaining what causes forehead acne, how to tell what type of forehead acne you have, and—most importantly—how to get rid of it, stat.

Meet Our Experts: Michele Green, MD, a board-certified cosmetic dermatologist in New York City, Michael Horn, MD, a board-certified plastic surgeon in Chicago, Debra Jaliman, MD, a board-certified dermatologist in New York City

Acne, whether on the forehead or chin, forms when the sebaceous glands (aka: oil glands) become clogged with excess sebum. "Sebum refers to the oil that is naturally produced by the skin, responsible for keeping the skin soft and moisturized," explains Dr. Michele Green, a board-certified cosmetic dermatologist in New York City. "When too much oil is produced combined with an excess of bacteria or dead skin cell build-up, the pores become clogged and prevent the oil from leaving the pore properly."

And, unfortunately, acne doesn't discriminate between sex or age. "Anyone can develop pimples, but acne is considered to have a genetic component, usually running in families," says Green. Fluctuations in hormones can also be associated

with acne breakouts. (This is why stress can sometimes be attributed to acne flare-ups.)

When it comes to forehead acne, though, the most common culprit is fungus or bacteria in the follicle. "Forehead acne generally is attributed to cosmetic products or hair care products that may contain oil," says [Dr. Debra Jaliman](#), a board-certified dermatologist in New York City. This can also occur when you do things like touch your face with contaminated hands or wearing a hat that's coated in material like oil, dirt, and dead skin cells.

What are the different types of forehead acne?

Though we typically talk about acne blanketly, there are different types of acne—and getting specific about what kind you're experiencing can make your treatment plan more effective. [Dr. Michael Horn, a board-certified plastic surgeon in Chicago, says comedones, pustules and papules, and milia are the most common kinds of acne one might experience on their forehead:](#)

- **Comedones:** These are more commonly known as blackheads or whiteheads. The type of acne on the forehead is usually caused by blocked pores, so whiteheads are more common.
- **Pustules and papules:** These are raised red pimples that are less frequent than comedones. Papules are red bumps and pustules are red bumps with white centers.
- **Milia:** Milia are a slightly different category than acne. "Acne forms when dead skin cells and excess oil clog pores and create bacteria," says Horn.

"Milia occurs when keratin is trapped beneath the skin's surface and creates little bumps that look similar to whiteheads."

Other types of acne you may hear about, like inflammatory acne and cysts and nodules, are typically less frequent and less severe on the forehead than on other face areas, says Horn.

How to treat forehead acne

If you notice any of these blemishes, there's one major rule you need to know about from the get-go: No picking. "Picking at pimples can not only increase the risk of infection, but it can also cause damage to the skin and significantly increase the risk of developing acne scars that are permanent and hard to treat," says Green.

Beyond that, consider scheduling a consultation with a dermatologist. A dermatologist can tell you which acne products to use and can prescribe medications that will treat acne quickly and effectively—even for mild cases. "Treating mild acne and preventing the worsening of breakouts can prevent acne scars, which are sometimes harder to get rid of than acne itself," says Green.

Of course, there are plenty of at-home remedies you can try, including:

- **Exfoliate:** Regular exfoliation with a gentle exfoliant will help keep pores clean if you have small forehead bumps. Use a non-irritating chemical exfoliant, not a face scrub.

- Sunday Riley Sunday Riley Good Genes All-in-One Lactic Acid Exfoliating Face Treatment Serum
- **Retinols:** These derivatives of vitamin A exfoliate the epidermis (aka outermost layer of skin) to eliminate dirt, oil, and dead skins cells from pores to help prevent pimples from developing.
- Paula's Choice Paula's Choice CLINICAL 1% Retinol Treatment
- **Benzoyl peroxide:** This compound contains antibacterial properties that fight acne-causing bacteria to help keep the pores unclogged.
- La Roche-Posay La Roche-Posay Effaclar Duo
Dual Acne Treatment
- **Salicylic acid:** This common skincare ingredient is a type of beta-hydroxy acid (BHA) that works as a chemical exfoliant. It increases skin cell

turnover by exfoliating the top layer of dead skin cells and deeply cleaning out clogged pores.

- the ordinary Salicylic Acid 2% Solution
- **Use a retinoid:** Topical retinoids—the stronger version of retinol—have anti-inflammatory properties and trigger the exfoliation of dead skin cells to enhance new skin cell production. The new cells push excess oil and dead cells out of blocked pores. Just note: Most retinoids are prescription only, but Differin is an example of an over-the-counter option.

Differin Differin Gel

If your forehead acne persists, make sure to schedule that dermatologist appointment. **"Some acne may require professional in-office extractions or cystic acne may need cortisone injections to reduce the swelling," says Horn.**

Plus, there are many effective topical and oral antibiotics (Accutane is a big one!) that can help clear your skin quickly.

And don't forget...

An ounce of prevention can go a long way in tackling forehead acne for good.

"Good skin care is very important for managing and preventing acne," says

Jaliman. "Make sure to wash your face with a gentle cleanser to rid your

forehead and face of excess oil." Then, you can follow that up with one of the

above treatments like salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide to help combat bacteria buildup before it settles in your pores.

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