



BIOCHEMISTRY AND PATHOPHYSIOLOGY OF BLACKHEAD AND WHITEHEAD ON CUTANEOUS SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT:

A comedo is a clogged hair follicle (pore) in the skin. Keratin (skin debris) combines with oil to block the follicle. A comedo can be open (blackhead) or closed by skin (whitehead) and occur with or without acne. The word "comedo" comes from the Latin comedere, meaning "to eat up", and was historically used to describe parasitic worms; in modern medical terminology, it is used to suggest the worm-like appearance of the expressed material. The chronic inflammatory condition that usually includes comedones, inflamed papules, and pustules (pimples) is called acne. Infection causes inflammation and the development of pus. Whether a skin condition classifies as acne depends on the number of comedones and infection. Comedones should not be confused with sebaceous filaments.

Comedo-type ductal carcinoma in-situ (DCIS) is not related to the skin conditions discussed here. DCIS is a non-invasive form of breast cancer, but comedo-type DCIS may be more aggressive, so may be more likely to become invasive.

KEYWORDS:

CAMEDO, BLACKHEADS, WHITEHEADS, KERATIN.

INTRODUCTION:

Clogged pores are the main cause of whiteheads. Your pores can become blocked for several reasons. One cause of blocked pores is hormonal changes, which are common triggers of acne. Certain life stages can increase the amount of sebum, or oil, your pores produce. Whiteheads are a mild and routine type of acne commonly called pimples. They develop when sebum plugs the opening of hair follicles, clogging pores. They appear as flesh-colored pimples and usually clear without the need for prescription medications. Whiteheads respond slowly and can be persistent, but they will eventually go away on their own. The best way to care for skin prone to whiteheads or acne is to use skincare formulas that can help prevent clogged pores since treating whiteheads can be difficult once they appear. Hormonal acne is when breakouts form in adulthood that could range from blackheads and whiteheads to painful cysts. Hormonal acne is linked to the overproduction of sebum (an oily substance in skin glands), which clogs pores, leading to pimples. Stress does not cause acne, but it can trigger or worsen it by changing a person's hormone balance. Stress can affect a person's hormonal balance and the skin's immune function. When a person is stressed, the body releases cortisol. This may lead to a worsening of acne. Blackheads are small bumps that appear on your skin due to clogged hair follicles. These bumps are called blackheads because the surface looks dark or black. Blackheads can usually be treated with

over-the-counter acne products.

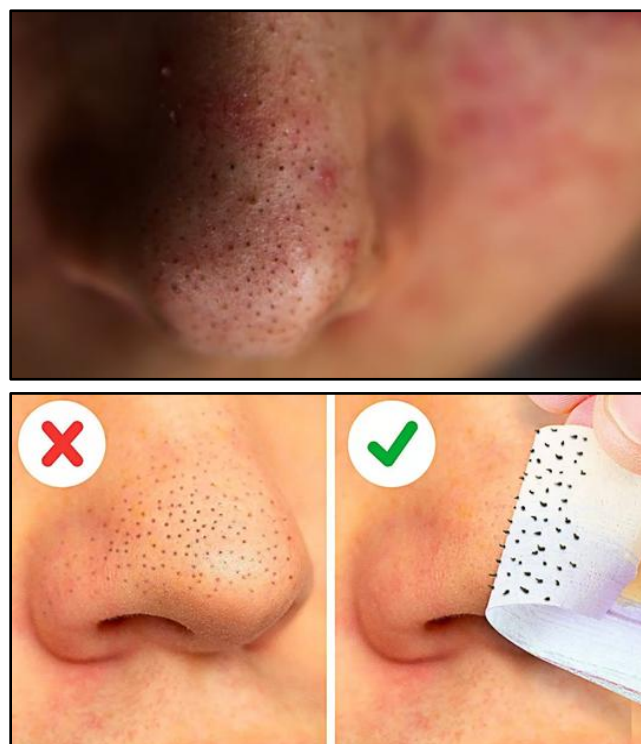


FIGURE-1: BLACKHEADS

These are a mild type of acne that usually form on the face, but they can also appear on the following body parts:

- ❖ back
- ❖ chest
- ❖ neck
- ❖ arms
- ❖ shoulders

One go-to ingredient for eliminating blackheads is salicylic acid, a beta hydroxy acid that increases cell turnover and unclogs pores. Treatment adds that the acne treatment can help dry active acne lesions because it is a mild chemical irritant.^[1]

SYMPTOMS: Because of their dark color, blackheads are easy to spot on the skin. They're slightly raised, although they aren't painful because they aren't inflamed like pimples. Pimples form when bacteria invade the blockage in the hair follicle, causing redness and inflammation.

General skin care tips

Avoid popping pimples. A pimple indicates trapped oil, sebum, and bacteria. ...

Wash twice daily, and again after sweating.

Avoid touching the face.

Moisturize.

Always wear sunscreen.

Focus on gentle products.

Avoid hot water.

Use gentle cleansing devices.

Although salicylic acid is best known for its ability to treat whiteheads and blackheads, it can also help eliminate buildup and scaling on the skin caused by psoriasis, warts, calluses and dandruff. Teenage acne usually lasts for five to 10 years, normally going away during the early 20s. It occurs in both sexes, although teenage boys tend to have the most severe cases. Women are more likely than men to have mild to moderate forms into their 30s and beyond. Acne is most common in girls from the ages of 14 to 17, and in boys from the ages of 16 to 19. Most people have acne on and off for several years before their symptoms start to improve as they get older. Acne often disappears when a person is in their mid-20s. In some cases, acne can continue into adult life. These hormonal fluctuations can lead to premenstrual acne as your pores become clogged with excess oil, dirt, and dead skin cells. Bacteria can get into the clogged pores and cause an infection. Premenstrual acne can cause whiteheads, blackheads, papules, pustules, nodules, and cysts.

TREATMENT:

OVER-THE-COUNTER (OTC) TREATMENTS: Many acne medications are available at drug and grocery stores and online without a prescription. These medications are available in cream, gel, and pad form and are put directly on your skin. The drugs contain ingredients such as

salicylic acid, benzoyl peroxide, and resorcinol. They work by killing bacteria, drying excess oil, and forcing the skin to shed dead skin cells.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS: If OTC treatment doesn't improve your acne, your doctor may suggest that you use stronger prescription medications. Medications that contain vitamin A keep plugs from forming in the hair follicles and promote more rapid turnover of skin cells. These medications are applied directly to your skin and can include tretinoin, tazarotene, or adapalene. Your doctor may also prescribe another type of topical medication that contains benzoyl peroxide and antibiotics. If you have pimples or acne cysts in addition to your blackheads, this type of medication may be particularly helpful.

MANUAL REMOVAL: Dermatologists or specially trained skin care professionals use a special instrument called a round loop extractor to remove the plug causing the blackhead. After a small opening is made in the plug, the doctor applies pressure with the extractor to remove the clog.^[2]

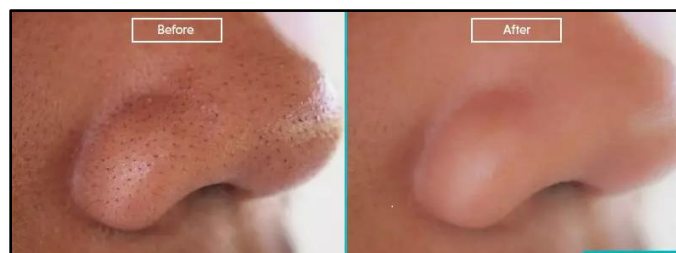


FIGURE-2: MICRODERMABRASION

MICRODERMABRASION: During microdermabrasion, a doctor or skin care professional uses a special instrument that contains a rough surface to sand the top layers of your skin. Sanding the skin removes clogs that cause blackheads.

CHEMICAL PEELS: Chemical peels also remove clogs and get rid of the dead skin cells that contribute to blackheads. During a peel, a strong chemical solution is applied to the skin. Over time, the top layers of the skin peel off, revealing smoother skin underneath. Mild peels are available over the counter, while stronger peels are performed by dermatologists or other skincare professionals. It's well known that excess oil is a contributing factor to acne, but you may not know that dry skin can play a role as well. Dryness prompts the skin to produce more oil, which can lead to clogged pores and

further acne.



FIGURE-3: LIGHT & LASER THERAPY FOR BLACKHEADS

LASER AND LIGHT THERAPY: These therapies use tiny beams of intense light to decrease oil production or kill bacteria. Both lasers and light beams reach below the surface of the skin to treat blackheads and acne without damaging the top layers of the skin.^[3]

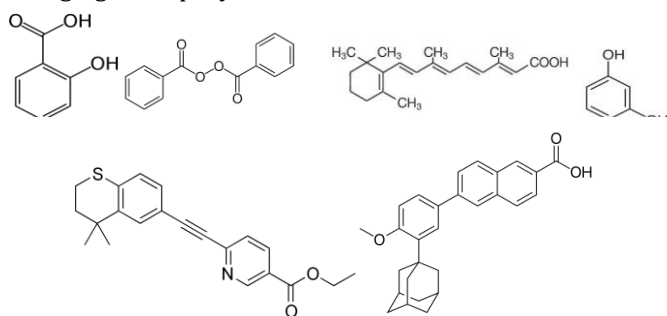


FIGURE-4: MEDICAMENTS FOR BLACKHEADS REMOVAL

PREVENTION: You can prevent blackheads without spending a lot of money by trying a few of the following ideas:

Wash regularly: Wash your face when you wake up and before you go to bed to remove oil buildup. Washing more than twice each day can irritate your skin and make your acne worse. Use a gentle cleanser that doesn't make your skin red or irritated. Some acne cleansing products have antibacterial ingredients that kill *P. acnes* bacteria.

Consider washing your hair every day, too, particularly if it's oily. Hair oils can contribute to clogged pores. It's also

important to wash your face after you eat oily foods such as pizza, because oil from these foods can clog pores.

USE OIL-FREE PRODUCTS: Any product that contains oil can contribute to new blackheads. Choose oil-free or noncomedogenic makeup, lotions, and sunscreens to avoid making your problem worse.^[4]

Blackheads and whiteheads are two common types of acne. As the names suggest, blackheads look like black dots on your skin and whiteheads look like white spots. While blackheads and whiteheads form differently, both respond to similar treatment approaches.

Blackheads are also called open comedones. Comedones are the skin-colored bumps that form when you have a pimple. In the case of blackheads, these comedones consist of follicles beneath your skin with very large openings, or pores. When you have blackheads, these large pores become clogged with a substance known as sebum. A chemical reaction with the sebum occurs under your skin. Melanin is oxidized and turns the clogged pores a black color. This form of acne is often found on your back, shoulders, and face. Whiteheads are known as closed comedones. The follicles beneath your skin become filled with bacteria and have a very small opening at the top of your skin. Air isn't able to enter the follicle, so the bacteria inside don't undergo the same chemical reaction that causes blackheads to be dark.

Like blackheads, whiteheads are typically found on your back, shoulders, and face. Both blackheads and whiteheads are caused by clogged pores, which means they can be treated similarly. Over-the-counter (OTC) products can be effective in treating blackheads and whiteheads. Look for products that contain benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid. Both help to remove oil and dead skin cells that clog your pores. You can find everything from facial washes to creams to astringents containing these ingredients at your local drug store.

applying tea tree oil to the skin

consuming bee pollen venom

following a low-glycemic diet

Above all, avoid touching your face as much as possible. You may be tempted to pick out blackheads or pop whiteheads. But spreading the bacteria that were in your pimples onto your skin can lead to more outbreaks across the rest of your face. Picking at pimples can also lead to scarring, discoloration, or skin that is red, irritated, and painful.

Common myths about acne.

There are many myths involving skin care and pimples. Here's a closer look at 5 of the big ones:

Myth 1: Eating chocolate causes pimples. Diet is only a small part of the picture, and it's unclear whether certain foods directly cause acne. If you think certain foods might be contributing to your acne, try keeping a food diary to see if you notice any patterns between specific foods and changes in your acne.

Myth 2: Frequent face-washing will stop breakouts. Frequent washing can irritate your skin. In fact, too much washing and scrubbing of your face can actually lead to more pimples. It's best to wash your face only twice a day — at most — with a mild soap. When you're done, pat your skin dry with a clean towel.

Myth 3: You can get rid of pimples by popping them. Popping zits may make them less noticeable in the moment, but it can make them stick around much longer. When you pop a pimple, you invite bacteria into your skin. The bacteria can make the redness and swelling worse or even lead to scarring over time.

Myth 4: Makeup makes breakouts worse. Not necessarily. If you want to wear makeup, go ahead. Just choose non-acnegenic or noncomedogenic products that won't clog your pores or irritate skin. Make sure you also regularly clean or replace your makeup brushes. Some makeups may even help your skin. Look for brands that contain benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid. If you suspect that makeup is making your breakouts worse, talk with a healthcare professional to help narrow down the cause.

Myth 5: Tanning can clear up your acne. Getting sun can temporarily improve your complexion. Over time, though, the sun's rays can leave skin dry and irritated, leading to even more pimples. Sun exposure can also lead to premature aging and even skin cancer. Use a noncomedogenic or non-acnegenic sunscreen that's at least SPF 15 before heading outdoors.



FIGURE-5: FORMULATIONS FOR EXFOLIATING SCRUBS

TIPS FOR PREVENTION: Taking care of your skin and washing it on a regular basis can help decrease the chances of either blackheads or whiteheads becoming a major skin problem.

Follow these tips to prevent breakouts:

Keep your face clean by washing it twice a day with a mild soap.

Try using OTC products that contain benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid to dry out excess oil.

Choose oil-free makeups that won't clog your pores.

Always wash makeup off before going to bed.

Avoid touching your face.

Resist picking at and popping pimples.

Use water-based gels and sprays for your hair. Better yet, keep hair off your face so products won't clog your pores.

If these lifestyle measures don't help to clear your skin or you are experiencing severe acne, it may be time to see your doctor or a dermatologist. A dermatologist is a doctor who specializes in skin health. They may prescribe oral or topical medications to help clear and heal your skin. They can also help you come up with a daily routine tailored to your skin type.

TRY AN EXFOLIATING PRODUCT: Exfoliating scrubs and masks remove dead skin cells from your face and can help reduce blackheads. Look for products that don't irritate your skin.^[5]

Opt for salicylic acid. "My go-to treatment for blackheads is recommending a salicylic acid wash once a day," he says.

Use an alpha or beta hydroxy acid cleanser.

Try a retinoid.

Make sure you exfoliate.

Chemical peels.

Microdermabrasion.

Extraction.

Don't pick at your skin.



CAUSE: Blackheads form when a hair follicle in the skin becomes clogged or plugged. Dead skin cells and excess oil collect in the follicle's opening, which produces a bump. If the skin over the bump opens, the air exposure causes the plug to look black, thus forming a blackhead. Blackheads form when a clog or plug develops in the opening of hair follicles in your skin. Each follicle contains one hair and a sebaceous gland that produces oil. This oil, called sebum, helps keep your skin soft. Dead skin cells and oils collect in the opening to the skin follicle, producing a bump called a comedo. If the skin over the bump stays closed, the bump is called a whitehead. When the skin over the bump opens, exposure to the air causes it to look black and a blackhead forms.^[6]

TYPES OF ACNE PIMPLES

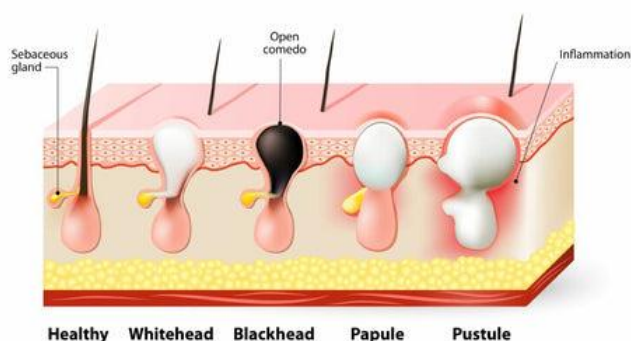


FIGURE-6: CUTANEOUS PROFILE

Some factors can increase your chances of developing acne and blackheads, including:

- Producing too much body oil
- The buildup of the *Propionibacterium acnes* bacteria on the skin
- Irritation of the hair follicles when dead skin cells don't shed on a regular basis
- Undergoing hormonal changes that cause an increase in oil production during the teen years, during menstruation, or while taking birth control pills
- Taking certain drugs, such as corticosteroids, lithium, or androgens

Some people believe that what you eat or drink can affect acne. Dairy products and foods that increase blood sugar levels, such as carbohydrates, may play a part in triggering acne, but researchers aren't convinced that there's a strong connection. Although it's tempting, squeezing blackheads with your fingers is a bad idea. That can cause trauma to the skin and lead to hyperpigmentation or scarring.^[7]

Best overall: Differin Gel.

Best cleanser: La Roche-Posay Effaclar Medicated Gel Cleanser.

Best scrub: AcneFree Blackhead Removing Scrub with Charcoal.

Best serum: The Ordinary Lactic Acid 10% + HA.

Best toner: Mele Refresh Even Tone Facial Tonic.

Best strips: Peace Out Skincare Pores.

Simple home remedies that might be helpful for getting rid of blackheads include green tea, tea tree oil, sugar scrub or a salt scrub. If you experience anxiety or feel too self-conscious due to blackheads, you should consult a skin specialist for the appropriate treatment. When it comes to clogged pores and blackheads, the most effective way to remove them is with manual removal (gentle squeezing). "Because blackheads don't have an infection, you don't want to treat them with harsh acne products. Instead, exfoliate. Exfoliation is the process of removing dead skin cells from the outer layer of your skin. While some people believe that this improves the appearance of their skin, it's not for everyone. Exfoliation is the removal of dead skin cells and built-up dirt from the skin's surface. The term comes from the Latin word *exfoliare* ('to strip off leaves'). This is a regular practice within the cosmetic industry, both for its outcome of promoting skin regeneration as well as providing a deep cleanse of the skin barrier. Being used in facials, this process can be achieved by mechanical or chemical means, such as microdermabrasion or chemical peels. Exfoliants are advertised as treatments that enhance beauty and promote a youthful and healthy appearance. Mechanical exfoliation methods involve physically scrubbing the skin with an abrasive material. These types of exfoliants include microfiber cloths, adhesive exfoliation sheets, micro-bead facial scrubs, crêpe paper, crushed apricot kernel or almond shells, sugar or salt crystals, pumice, and abrasive materials such as sponges, loofahs, brushes, and fingernails. A variety of facial scrubs are available in over-the-counter products for application by the user. People with dry skin should avoid exfoliants which have a significant portion of pumice, or crushed volcanic rock. Pumice is known as a material to exfoliate the skin of the feet.^[8]



FIGURE-7: LOOFAH & PUMICE STONE

LOOFAH: These Loofahs are shower accessories that are commonly used for a dual purpose of cleaning and exfoliating the skin. Loofahs are named for the tropical and subtropical gourd within the cucumber family that is used as the material to make the shower sponges. As the loofah plant matures, its fibers dry out, allowing the shell left over to be used as the spongy material for the exfoliation tool after their seeds are removed and the gourd is sliced and shaped. Loofahs offer benefits beyond exfoliation: they

effectively spread soap around the body to cleanse and they stimulate blood circulation during use. Because loofahs are porous, they are more susceptible to harboring bacteria and fungal organisms that could be harmful and cause infections. Proper care for the loofah includes rinsing and drying the loofah after each use and soaking the loofah in a diluted solution of bleach to clean it weekly. It is also recommended to replace a loofah every 3 to 4 weeks.

EXFOLIATION NET: Exfoliation nets are shower accessories used for exfoliation and lathering that are composed of nylon material in the form of knotted mesh nets. Exfoliation nets are native to Ghana, but they are a familiar shower accessory in numerous countries in West Africa. The shape and material allow exfoliation nets to dry quicker than typical sponges, so there is less accumulation of bacteria in the accessory. Proper care for exfoliation nets includes leaving the net to hang dry between uses and cleaning it using a washing machine or hand-wash method weekly.^[9]

MICRO-BEAD SCRUBS: Micro-bead scrubs are cosmetic products that contain small plastic spheres that act as exfoliating components when scrubbed against skin. The plastic beads act as alternatives for natural, eco-friendly exfoliating agents such as pumice, oatmeal, and walnut husks. Microbeads are commonly composed of the material polyethylene terephthalate (PET); however, they can also be made with other plastic materials as well. When scrubbed against the skin, the beads polish the skin by removing the dead skin cells from the top layer of the skin. The steps involved to use a micro-bead scrub include softening the skin using lukewarm water, gently scrubbing the product against the skin in circular motions, and rinsing the product off the skin. Due to the significant environmental impact and harm caused to marine ecosystems, microplastic beads have been banned by many countries.

PUMICE STONE: Pumice, which is an igneous rock that is composed of solidified lava that rapidly cools with gas bubbles being trapped inside of it, is commonly used as an exfoliating material. Pumice is a decently abrasive material, making it useful as an exfoliating agent. Pumice stone can be effectively used as an exfoliation tool on calluses or corns, often found on feet, to remove the dead skin cells. To effectively use a pumice stone as an exfoliation tool, soaking the affected area in warm water until the skin begins to soften is a recommended first step. The pumice stone then must be wet before rubbing against the affected area with moderate pressure for about 2 to 3 minutes.

DERMAPLANING: The exfoliating process of dermaplaning requires a single blade razor resembling a scalpel called a dermatome. The dermatome is gently dragged across the skin on the face to remove the top layer of dead skin cells and peach fuzz. This process helps the skin to absorb products better and boost the production of collagen, which improves the texture and tightness of the skin. A common misconception is that the peach fuzz that

is removed via dermaplaning will grow back thicker and darker, giving the appearance of a beard. This has been denied by dermaplaning specialists, who state that the removal of the dead skin and peach fuzz does not impact growth, color, or texture of facial hair. The procedure is recommended to be performed by an aesthetician. In most cases, the blade must be used on clean, dry skin and covers the forehead, cheeks, chin, nose, and neck. However, dermaplaning can also be performed on skin that has oil applied to it.^[10]

CHEMICAL EXFOLIATION: Methods of chemical exfoliation for aesthetic enhancement of the skin have dated back to the time of the Ancient Egyptians, who used a combination of animal oils, alabaster, salt, and sour milk as an exfoliant to improve skin quality. Various other chemical exfoliation techniques were developed in multiple other civilizations, such as Greek, Roman, Turkish, Indian, and Hungarian peoples. Chemical exfoliation to lessen the appearance of freckles with phenol peeling was a method developed by Tilbury Fox in 1871, and from there the use of phenol peeling increased in popularity.

METHODS: Chemical exfoliation methods, also known as chemical peeling, utilizes chemical substances in order to remove dead skin cells from the face. These types of exfoliants contain alpha-hydroxy acids (glycolic acid, lactic acid, mandelic acid, malic acid, tartaric acid, and citric acid), beta hydroxy acids (salicylic acid), polyhydroxy acids (lactobionic acid, gluconolactone, and galactose) or enzymes (trypsin or collagenase). These chemicals weaken cell adhesion, allowing them to ease away. Out of these, only AHAs (alpha-hydroxyl acids) and BHAs (beta hydroxyl acids) are available on the market for daily use. While AHAs are applied to clear the outer layer of the skin, BHAs penetrate and clean it from within. These scrubs may be applied in high concentrations by medical professionals, or provided in lower concentrations via over-the-counter products. This type of exfoliation is recommended for people treating acne. In Continental European beauty spa treatments, wine-producing grapes are considered to have exfoliating properties and are used in the practice of vinotherapy. Different methods of hair removal also exfoliate the skin.^[11]

Waxing functions as a mechanical exfoliant, plucking the hair out of the skin. While it can be performed every two to eight weeks, waxing is not carried out as frequently as many exfoliants. Thus, it does not fully substitute for an exfoliation regimen. Chemical depilatory, such as Nair and shaving powder, contains calcium hydroxide and/or thioglycolic acid. These chemical hair removal products function as a chemical exfoliant. They are applied more frequently than waxing (once a week) since they only partially destroy the hair below the skin, rather than pulling up the entire root as waxing does. Using them weekly can substitute for a weekly exfoliant regime. Wet shaving also has mechanical exfoliating properties. Gliding a shaving brush vigorously across the face removes dead skin cells and cleanses the skin simultaneously. After applying the lather with a brush, the use of a razor

removes dead skin because the razor is dragged closely across the skin, and exfoliates more effectively than an electric razor.

TECHNOLOGICAL EXFOLIATION: Technological advances in the cosmetics industry have led to innovative exfoliation techniques, such as laser resurfacing.^[12]

ABLATIVE LASER RESURFACING: Most commonly used for facial rejuvenation, this exfoliation process utilizes a laser to treat flaws on the skin surface. This method of exfoliation is most effective for treating wrinkles and discoloration. Carbon dioxide lasers, erbium lasers, and combinations of these are examples of the types of ablative lasers that are used in the resurfacing process. Fractional ablative laser resurfacing procedure: The top outer layer of the skin is removed by the laser, which simultaneously heats the layer of skin lying beneath it. This process encourages collagen growth, which will improve the texture and tightness of the skin. The top layer of the skin will continue to heal and grow back to reveal a smoother and tighter appearance. Fractional versions of ablative lasers have also recently been developed. These are designed to leave minimal amounts of untreated tissue on the skin to provide quicker healing time and less side effects. Ablative laser resurfacing has multiple risks associated with the exfoliation process. These risks include: redness, swelling, itching, pain, acne, infection, skin discoloration, and scarring. To have ablative laser resurfacing performed, one must consult with a doctor to review suitability of the procedure.^[13]

DERMABRASION: It is used to reduce the appearance of flaws on facial skin, such as facial lines, wrinkles, scars, and discoloration. In this exfoliation process, a rapidly rotating device is used to remove the outermost layer of facial skin. Dermabrasion requires anesthetics to numb the skin before the procedure. Depending on the extent of the treatment, further numbing medication might be provided to limit the amount of pain felt from the treatment. There are multiple risks associating with dermabrasion. These risks include: redness, swelling, acne, enlarged pores, skin discoloration, infection, scarring, or rashes. In most cases, skin that is treated with dermabrasion will be sensitive with splotches of redness and discoloration for weeks following the procedure. Dermabrasion is a skin-resurfacing procedure that uses a rapidly rotating device to sand the outer layers of skin. Immediately after dermabrasion, treated skin will be reddish and swollen. The skin that grows back is usually smoother.^[14]

DISADVANTAGES: According to dermatologists, chemical or manual exfoliation is not medically necessary, as dead skin cells already exfoliate naturally, and excessive artificial exfoliation can break the skin's barrier against microorganisms and lead to infection, as well as tightness and sensitivity in the skin. Artificial exfoliation can exacerbate dry, flaky skin, which needs moisturization for repair, and can result in some initial redness to the skin. Near the end of chemical peels, the skin frosts, with colors varying from a bright white to grey on the skin surface.

Marine environmental impact of microbeads. Microbead particles used in mechanical exfoliation are too small (less than 1 mm) to be caught by sewage works, so large amounts of microbeads are released into the environment, which damage marine ecosystems. Consequently, in June 2014, Illinois became the first American state to ban the use of microbeads, and cosmetics manufacturers such as L'Oreal, Johnson & Johnson, and Colgate agreed to use more natural ingredients.^[15]

GENERAL SKIN CARE TIPS

- ✓ Avoid popping pimples. A pimple indicates trapped oil, sebum, and bacteria.
- ✓ Wash twice daily, and again after sweating.
- ✓ Avoid touching the face.
- ✓ Moisturize.
- ✓ Always wear sunscreen.
- ✓ Focus on gentle products.
- ✓ Avoid hot water.
- ✓ Use gentle cleansing devices.

Home remedies for blackheads are green tea, tea tree oil, salt scrub or sugar scrub. Green tea helps lower the oil production on your skin while tea tree oil can stop the growth of bacteria. The salt or sugar scrub exfoliates your skin and removes the dead skin that is clogging the open skin pore. With care, you can safely extract blackheads at home. This is easiest just after a shower when your skin is warm and the gunk inside the pores is softer. You can also prep your skin with a face steamer, if you prefer. You will need to follow the same steps that a professional would.

If a blackhead is close to the surface of your skin, it's more likely to go away on its own. However, some blackheads can be deeply embedded in your skin. Deep, embedded blackheads are less likely to go away on their own. If you have embedded blackheads, a dermatologist or medical aesthetician can remove them.

CONCLUSION: If you get blackheads -- a type of acne that happens when dead skin cells and oil clog your pores -- you have plenty of methods to treat them. There are also ways to prevent new ones from forming but remember: Picking, squeezing, and popping blackheads aren't among your options. That approach could make your situation a lot worse. Try some of these treatments instead. Salicylic acid is a popular over-the-counter ingredient in many skin cleansers. It breaks down dead skin cells and extra oil before they can clog your pores. When you go to the pharmacy, check the ingredient labels carefully. You'll find products with salicylic acid that range in strength from 0.5% to 5%. The acid can be harsh on some people's skin. You might want to put it on every other day, rather than daily, to see how your skin reacts. As for other acne-fighting ingredients, blackheads don't contain bacteria, so benzoyl peroxide -- a powerful antibacterial against most other forms of acne -- may or may not help. Retinoid creams and lotions, which are made from vitamin A, can unclog your pores. They also help your body make

new skin cells. You can buy some retinoids over the counter in drugstores, but you'll need a prescription for most. Because retinoids make your skin more sensitive to UV rays, you should use these creams and lotions before bed and out of the sun. Extraction might sound scary, but many health professionals know how to remove unsightly blackheads with specialized tools. You can find home extraction kits in stores. But most medical experts repeat that classic advice: "Don't try this at home." A DIY procedure can cause scarring, even if you think you know what you're doing. A chemical peel is usually for people who want to improve the appearance of sun damage and minor scars, but it may help with certain types of acne. The procedure can unclog pores and start up new skin growth. You get a chemical peel in your doctor's office. It removes cells from the top layer of your skin.

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