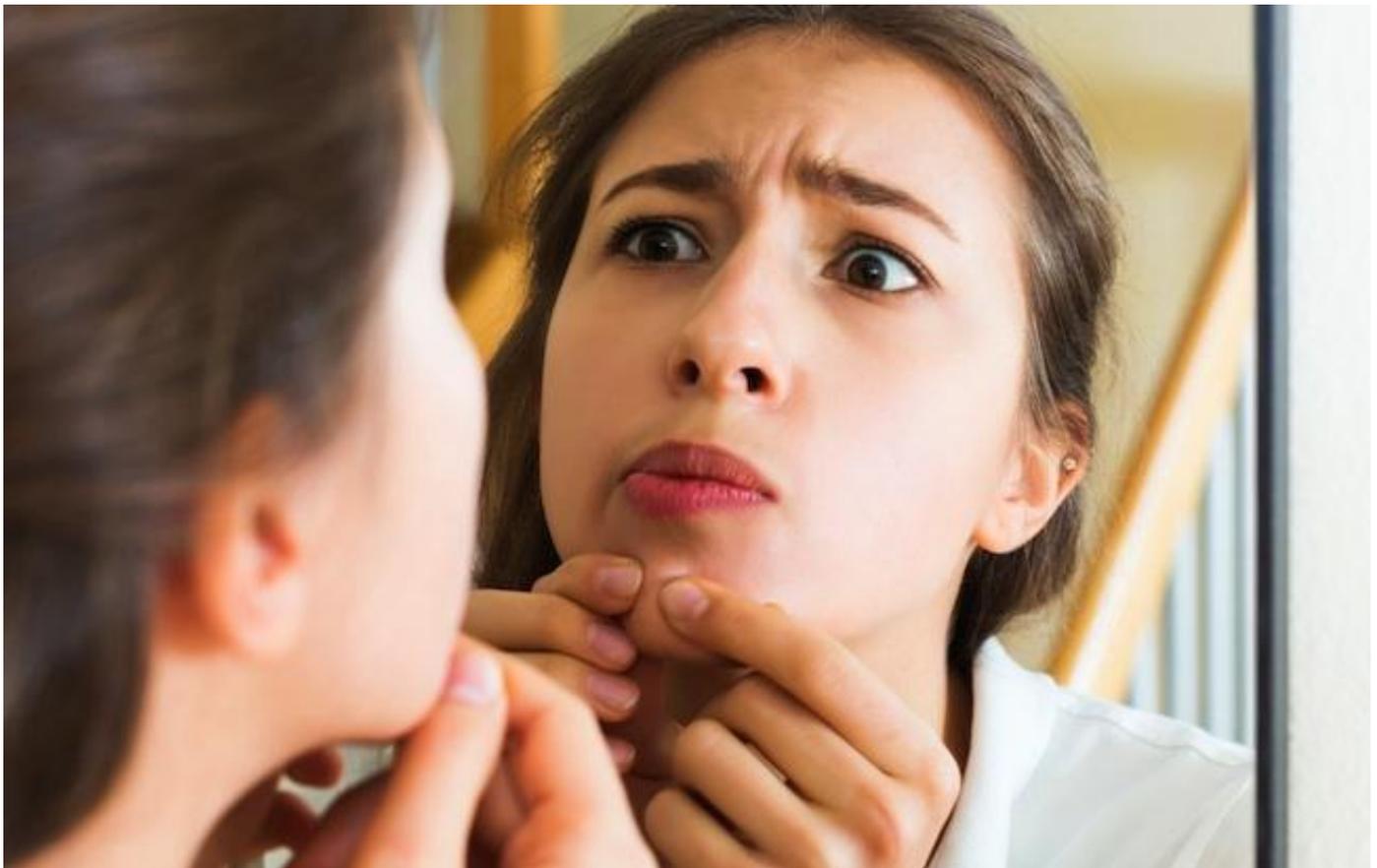


What to Do After Popping a Zit So Your Skin Doesn't End Up Looking Worse

Fix the pimple fallout ASAP.

BY GRACE GOLD, October 27, 2015



We all know you're not supposed to pop a pimple. Not only can it leave you with a lasting scar, but you may inadvertently push bacteria deeper, causing an endless cycle of zits cropping up in the same spot. (Ugh, we've been there!)

However, we know that sometimes you just can't keep your hands off an especially annoying one. So we asked Washington, D.C., dermatologist Rebecca Kazin, M.D., associate director of Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery Chevy Chase and John Hopkins department of dermatology faculty member, how to best heal the damage if you do pop that zit.

Have Clean Hands

Don't attempt to touch anything without washing your hands thoroughly with soap before and afterwards, or you may make things worse. Dirty hands drag bacteria from the zit to other parts of your face, causing breakouts to spread. And outside bacteria that is introduced to the zit can turn it from a passing disturbance to a long-lasting inflammation disaster.

Apply Ointment

“If you pop the pimple, it becomes a micro-wound,” explains Kazin. At this point, it’s best to apply a little antibiotic ointment like **Neosporin** (\$6, drugstore.com) at night to help speed up healing. Allowing it to “breathe” during the day without anything on it, if possible, will also help it mend faster. (You don’t want to keep ointment on it all the time, since oxygen is also needed for skin repair.)

Don't Keep Going in for More

Once you’ve popped it, resist the urge to continuously badger it, even though it may look like there’s more to push out. “The pimple will swell in response, and it’s best not to try to get more out of it because the bump that’s left over is most likely just swelling,” says Kazin. You’ll also worsen trauma to the area, increasing the chances of scarring and spreading.

Do NOT Touch That Scab!

“The most important thing to prevent scarring is to not pick the scab once it forms,” says Kazin. That scab is hard at work regenerating skin beneath it, and interrupting the process is the absolute worst thing you can do. Any scabs that form after that first one is picked off won’t set as well as the original one, and you’re nearly guaranteeing yourself lingering discoloration or a scar.

Conceal with Care

Kazin says it’s okay to apply makeup on top of the popped zit. That being said, it’s not ideal (so if you don’t have to—don’t), but it shouldn’t interfere with healing if you’re gently cleansing in the morning and evening and going makeup-free overnight while catching your zzz’s.

And if You Can Keep Your Hands off...Use an Acne Cover

If you haven’t popped it yet, avoid temptation by keeping the zit out of sight. A shield like **Nexcare Acne Absorbing Cover** (\$8, walgreens.com) goes over the blemish to absorb yucky pus and oil. The cover turns white when the job is done so that you don’t have to peek. We found that it really worked to keep our hands off, and no one seemed to notice or question the tidy little bandage! “I like to wear them to bed, so that when I wake up in the morning, I don’t have a crusty scab over my zit, and I can apply makeup much more easily,” says WomensHealthMag.com associate editor Ashley Oerman.

The bottom line: It’s true that not popping a zit is always the best option to make it go away fastest. But if you do burst the pimple, you can speed up healing by treating it like a micro-wound with ointment application at night and keeping your hands off your face.