

## SKIN CARE

# 9 best pimple patches to heal breakouts, according to experts

We consulted three board-certified dermatologists on the efficacy of pimple patches against breakouts, and are sharing their top-rated recommendations.



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**By Nicole Saunders and Christina Colizza**

Snoozing through your alarm. Spilling coffee on your crisp, white shirt. Socks that scrunch down inside your sneaker. It doesn't take much to start your day on the wrong foot. And while those mishaps are certainly not ideal, nothing is more demoralizing than waking up to a glaring red blemish on your face.

Unfortunately, zits happen to just about everyone. In fact, [acne](#) affects more than 50 million Americans, according to the [American Academy of Dermatology Association \(AADA\)](#). Though pesky bumps are normal, they can be painful, distracting and embarrassing. Pimples patches won't banish acne forever, but they can help those one-off blemishes that seem to erupt out of nowhere.

Not familiar with these spot treatments? “Pimple patches are small stickers that are made with a soothing gel called hydrocolloid,” says [Dr. Bradley Glodny](#), a board-certified dermatologist and owner of Park Avenue Dermatology in New York City. As this hydrocolloid gel adheres to the skin, it absorbs excess oil and dirt away from pimples, says [Dr. Hadley King](#), a board-certified dermatologist in New York City.

"While stuck to the skin, acne patches also have the added benefit of preventing you from picking or trying to pop the pimple," says King. This is key because when you pick at a pimple, it increases inflammation, can prolong healing time and boosts the risk of infection, discoloration and scarring.

**SKIP AHEAD** [The best pimple patches of 2023](#) | [How to shop for pimple patches](#) | [When are pimple patches most effective?](#)

To help you determine the best pimple patch for your skin, we spoke with dermatologists about what to look for when shopping and added in highly rated options from retailers like [Amazon](#), [Target](#) and Sephora that align with our experts' guidance.

## Our top picks

- **Best overall:** [ZitSticka Killa Kit](#)
- **Best for sensitive skin:** [Hero Cosmetics Invisible Mighty Patch](#)
- **Best for oily skin:** [Peace Out Acne Healing Dots](#)

# How we chose the best pimple patches

To choose the best pimple patches, we asked experts what key factors to prioritize when shopping. Here is what they say to keep in mind:

- **Look for acne-fighting ingredients:** Some pimple patches are made using only hydrocolloid gel, while others are infused with additional acne-fighting ingredients. What will work best for you will depend on your skin type, according to Dr. Orit Markowitz, a board-certified dermatologist and founder of [OptiSkin Medical](#) in New York City. If you have [sensitive](#) skin, you may want a basic hydrocolloid patch; if your zits are more stubborn, consider patches with blemish-busting ingredients like [salicylic acid](#) or tea tree oil. If you are dealing with a deep, [cystic pimple](#), Glodny suggests looking for a patch with micropoints (also called micro darts), which are tiny points that gently penetrate the skin to deliver ingredients deeper.
- **Size:** No two pimples are exactly alike, so different sized and shaped patches will help you target different types of breakouts. A larger sticker can tackle a cluster of pimples, while a little circle is a good choice for a small whitehead.

## The best pimple patches of 2023

We consulted three New York-based dermatologists about their top pimple patch recommendations, plus considered options that earned high ratings from Select staff members and reviewers who have used them.

### ZitSticka Killa Kit

Both King and Markowitz recommend [Zitsticka patches](#), which come with priming cleaning swabs to use before applying the patch. "I like that they have micro darts filled with salicylic acid, [niacinamide](#) and oligopeptide-76 to treat pimples," says King. "It enables these ingredients, all of which help reduce acne, to really get in there." They also contain [hyaluronic acid](#), which balances out the potential drying effect of salicylic acid so your zit doesn't start to flake and scab as it heals, according to Markowitz.



### ZitSticka Killa Kit

\$29.00

AMAZON

\$29.00

ULTA

\$19.59

TARGET

### Peace Out Acne Healing Dots

King is also a fan of these pimple patches, which are available in packs of [20](#) and [60](#). The patches combine hydrocolloid and salicylic acid to help remove oil and debris from clogged pores. They also contain aloe vera leaf extract, which has anti-inflammatory properties that help soothe and calm [redness](#), according to King.



### Peace Out Acne Healing Dots

\$18.00

AMAZON

\$19.00

SEPHORA

\$19.00

ULTA

### Peach Slices Acne Spot Dots

These highly-rated acne patches are ideal for dry or sensitive skin since they skip potentially drying agents, like salicylic acid. The translucent, hydrocolloid patches come in three sizes — 7mm, 10mm and 12mm, which you can use as needed to cover a single small zit or a cluster. "The smallest is one of the smallest options I've seen, and they are also thinner than most hydrocolloid patches — so this makes them easier to wear without it being obvious," says King. To use these cleanse your skin first, apply the patch and then remove after eight hours, according to the brand.



### Peach Slices Acne Spot Dots

\$4.88

AMAZON

\$4.99

ULTA

\$4.99

CVS PHARMACY

### Dr. Jart+ Focuspot Micro Tip Blemish Patches

Markowitz is a fan of these acne patches, which use ingredients like niacinamide and antioxidant-rich turmeric, to help soothe very inflamed pimples. Dr. Jart offers two types of pimple patches: a [blemish](#) option, which uses vitamin B3 to help clear breakouts and hyaluronic acid for hydration and a [dark spot](#) option, which relies on [vitamin C](#) to help fade discoloration, according to the brand. The latter is great for darker skin tones, who tend to be left with dark spots as acne heals, says Markowitz.



### Dr. Jart+ Focuspot Micro Tip Blemish Patches

\$20.00

SEPHORA

## Mario Badescu Drying Patches

These patches are another favorite of King's because of its ingredients: they have salicylic acid and hyaluronic acid to hydrate the skin, plus [niacinamide](#), which can help improve skin tone and texture. Select's associate updates editor, [Zoe Malin](#), is a fan of because of how thin they are. "They are practically invisible when you put them on," she says. "So you can totally wear them during the day when working from home — I doubt anyone would be able to tell you were wearing them on a video call."



### Mario Badescu Drying Patches

\$16.15

AMAZON

\$17.00

ULTA

\$17.00

WALMART

## Hero Cosmetics Invisible Mighty Patch

"The patches are very effective at extracting a pimple, but it may take a couple rounds of patches depending on how deep or large of a pimple it is," says Select's editorial projects associate Rebecca Rodriguez, who tried them for [Select's Wellness Awards](#). "I like that they're a little more translucent than other patches I have tried because they blend well with my skin tone and don't scream 'hey I've got a pimple.'" Unlike other patches that have additional acne-fighting ingredients, these solely rely on the hydrocolloid gel to draw out any sebum or debris from your skin, which makes them gentle for sensitive skin.



### Hero Cosmetics Mighty Patch

\$17.99

AMAZON

\$17.99

TARGET

\$17.99

ULTA

### Cosrx Pimple Patches

King likes these because each package contains small, medium and large hydrocolloid bandages, giving you options for pimples of different sizes. These Cosrx patches rely solely on hydrocolloid gel to remove excess oil so they're an ideal option for anyone with sensitive skin because there are no additional ingredients to irritate you, according to King. These are also one of the most consistently highly rated options on our list with an average 4.5-star rating from 31,417 reviews on Amazon.



#### Cosrx Pimple Patches

\$13.99  
~~\$18.00~~

AMAZON

\$6.00

DERMSTORE

### Starface Hydro Stars

These fragrance-free, star-shaped patches add a little fun to your acne-fighting journey. "Getting a pimple can be such a bummer," says contributing editor Bethany Heitman. "These bright yellow stars add an element of fun to the entire experience. Because of the shape, I found they were best for smaller zits. I mostly wear them at home. But, I did wear a few to a recent Taylor Swift concert — they covered my breakout and felt festive." A 100% hydrocolloid option, Markowitz also says they are helpful for reducing zit-related inflammation on sensitive skin.



#### Starface Hydro Stars

\$14.97

AMAZON

\$14.97

WALMART

\$14.99

TARGET

## Nexcare Acne Absorbing Cover

Another 100% hydrocolloid option, these patches from Nexcare come in a pack of 36 or 108 patches and are another favorite of Markowitz's. Like the Mighty Patch option from Hero Cosmetics, these turn white once any oily secretion is absorbed, according to the brand. Do not combine these patches with other acne medications or treatments though, according to Nexcare.



### Nexcare Acne Absorbing Cover

~~\$19.55~~  
**\$16.43**

AMAZON

**\$16.43**

WALMART

## Avarelle Acne Cover Patch

These round, unscented patches, which have a 4.3-star average rating from 72,888 reviews on Amazon, contain tea tree oil to help shrink pimples. They're also infused with calendula, which is known to soothe irritation, according to the brand. In the packet, you'll get 40 patches in small, medium and large sizes.



### Avarelle Acne Cover Patch

**\$8.49**

AMAZON

**\$13.61**

WALMART

# How to shop for pimple patches

Picking the best option is all about considering your skin's specific needs. Simple hydrocolloid patches are ideal for sensitive skin, says Glodny. If you don't have sensitive skin, you can consider patches that either have micro darts (little points that help ingredients get deeper into a zit by creating small pricks in the skin) or the following acne-fighting ingredients:

- **Salicylic acid** is a beta hydroxy acid that can help unclog pores or remove excess sebum. Patches containing salicylic acid could be a good option for a fairly inflamed pimple, but may irritate dryer, sensitive skin.
- **Tea tree oil** or tea tree extract can be very drying, says Markowitz. This makes it a great tool for drying out pimples. However, if you have dry or sensitive skin, it's probably best to skip it.
- **Hyaluronic acid** is often paired with other, more drying ingredients like salicylic acid. That's because it helps to hydrate the skin and can prevent drying caused by other ingredients associated with fighting acne, says King.
- **Niacinamide** is another great addition to a pimple patch because it can improve skin tone and texture, according to King. "Plus, it has stabilizing effects on the skin's barrier function, which can help improve moisture retention."

## Can pimple patches make acne worse?

As long as you're not allergic or sensitive to an ingredient found in the patches, pimple patches should not make acne worse, according to our experts. As mentioned, patches with salicylic acid or tea tree oil can be more irritating — if you have sensitive skin, skip patches with these ingredients in them.

Worried peeling the patch off will hurt or cause damage? Don't be. Pimple patches aren't like bandages for cuts or wounds. The hydrocolloid gel makes them less sticky, so they gently sit on top of your pimple and then easily (and gently) peel off when you're ready. In fact, they can actually prevent scarring. These patches prevent you from picking at your blemish or trying to pop it on your own, which is what can lead to [scarring and hyperpigmentation](#), says Glodny.

## When are pimple patches most effective?

Pimple patches can be very effective on mild breakouts and superficial pimples like small whiteheads and pustules that are just popping up or that recently came to a head, says King. They can also work on [cystic acne](#). “This type of acne sits deeper underneath the skin, making it more challenging for acne-fighting ingredients to get to,” says Glodny. “The prolonged contact that a pimple patch has (you usually keep them on for six to eight hours) means that the ingredients have time to really penetrate.” However, deeper pimples may require multiple nights of treatment with a pimple patch before they're fully gone.

Another pro of over-the-counter pimple patches is that hydrocolloid patches generally don't dehydrate your skin or leave it flaky, compared to more harsh [acne spot treatments](#) featuring salicylic acid and benzoyl peroxide, according to King. She adds that pimple patches are most effective on sensitive skin and mild acne patients, although those with oily, combination, normal and even dry skin can also use them and see results.

## How do you apply a pimple patch?

To avoid transferring bacteria to your pimple, wash your hands before applying a patch. Make sure your skin is clean and dry as well and skip any spot treatment creams, according to Glodny. By doubling up, you risk irritation or drying out your skin, plus, the patch won't stay put if your skin is sticky with cream.

To adhere the patch to your pimple, peel it off the sheet and center it over your zit. Press down gently and it will stick to your skin. Then, if you need to apply other face products (like moisturizer or makeup), just avoid the area directly around the sticker, according to our experts.

## Meet our experts

At Select, we work with experts who have specialized knowledge and authority based on relevant training and/or experience. We also take steps to ensure that all expert advice and recommendations are made independently and with no undisclosed financial conflicts of interest.

- **Dr. Bradley Glodny** is a board-certified dermatologist and the owner of Park Avenue Dermatology in New York City.
- **Dr. Hadley King** is a board-certified dermatologist in New York City.
- **Dr. Orit Markowitz** is a board-certified dermatologist and founder of OptiSkin in New York City.

## Why trust Select?

Nicole Saunders is a former associate commerce editor for NBC Select.

Christina Colizza is a former editor for NBC Select.

Bethany Heitman is a contributor at NBC Select and a journalist who regularly covers topics like beauty, home and lifestyle. For this story, she interviewed three experts to gather their guidance and product recommendations. She also researched highly-rated pimple patches based on their advice.