

# benzoyl peroxide vs. salicylic acid

WHAT TO USE AND WHEN

> BENZOYL PEROXIDE AND SALICYLIC ACID ARE THE TWO MAIN INGREDIENTS IN MOST OVER-THE-COUNTER TOPICAL ACNE PRODUCTS. BUT HOW DO THEY WORK, HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT AND WHICH ONE IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

## > salicylic acid PREVENTS CLOGGED PORES BY AIDING EXFOLIATION

Acne forms when skin cells inside the hair follicle clump together and plug up the follicle. Salicylic acid helps speed cell turnover on the surface and slow the shedding of cells inside the follicle to prevent the clogging that causes a pimple. Salicylic acid also breaks down whiteheads and blackheads. Technically a beta hydroxy acid, salicylic acid exfoliates and reduces oiliness, acne and the appearance of fine lines. It is available over-the-counter in concentrations of 0.5 to 2%, but those with sensitive skin should start with a lower concentration before trying stronger products.



**KINERASE CLEAR SKIN BLEMISH DISSOLVER**  
This spot treatment contains salicylic acid and glycolic acid to unclog pores and reduce the appearance of active blemishes. **\$39; nordstrom.com**



**WEXLER ACNOSTAT OVERNIGHT ACNE REPAIR LOTION**  
Fight acne and aging with one product that contains salicylic acid plus anti-aging, enzyme-based ingredients that reduce fine lines and imperfections. **\$20; bathandbodyworks.com**



**MURAD CLARIFYING CLEANSER**  
In addition to salicylic acid, this daily cleanser contains triclosan to eliminate 99.9 percent of the surface bacteria that cause acne. **\$26; murad.com**

### HOW TO USE

San Francisco dermatologist Kathy Fields, MD, recommends a leave-on product or gentle scrub or wash that doesn't strip the skin of moisture. "The key is to find a product you like using so you stick with it," she says.

### SIDE EFFECTS

This ingredient can be irritating to sensitive skin, especially when combined with benzoyl peroxide, sulfur or other acne treatments. Mild stinging upon application is common. Salicylic acid may cause increased sun sensitivity, so be sure to use sunscreen daily.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Salicylic acid must be used continuously for results. If you stop, your pores will get clogged once again and your acne will return. Salicylic acid does not have an effect on the production of sebum (the skin's natural oil), or P. acnes, the bacteria that cause pimples. And Dr. Fields adds, "The biggest mistake people make is thinking they are cured when pimples clear up and stopping medication."

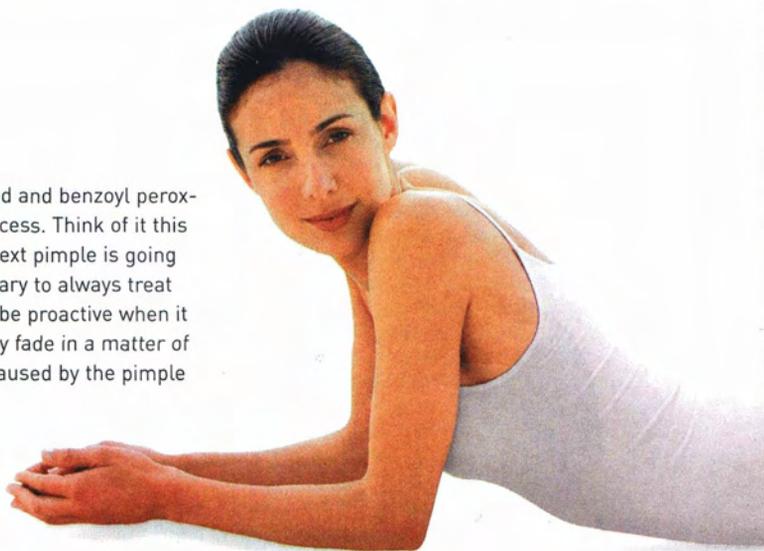
## FIND A DOCTOR NOW!



Turn to the *NewBeauty Workbook* on page 181 for everything you must know before selecting a doctor.

## PIMPLE PREVENTION

Consistent use of both salicylic acid and benzoyl peroxide is necessary for long-term success. Think of it this way: You never know where your next pimple is going to pop up, which is why it's necessary to always treat the entire face. Another reason to be proactive when it comes to acne: While a pimple may fade in a matter of days, scars caused by picking or caused by the pimple itself remain for a lifetime.



## &gt; benzoyl peroxide

KILLS THE BACTERIA THAT CAUSE BREAKOUTS

Benzoyl peroxide is an antibacterial agent that reduces *P. acnes*, the bacteria responsible for breakouts. As an added plus, it also helps "dry up" existing blemishes. Available both over-the-counter and by prescription in strengths ranging from 2.5 to 10%, benzoyl peroxide was one of the first acne treatments to become widely available. New York City dermatologist David Colbert, MD, believes, "It is a good ingredient for most acne sufferers," even those with inflamed acne in the form of bumps and nodules.

## HOW TO USE

When starting out with benzoyl peroxide, San Francisco dermatologist Katie Rodan, MD, recommends using it on alternating days so your skin has an opportunity to adjust.

## SIDE EFFECTS

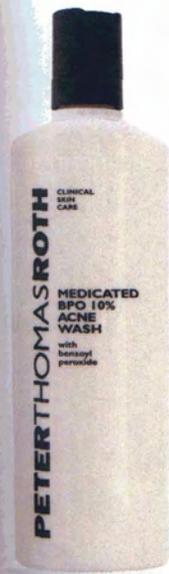
Can be drying or irritating. You may experience mild peeling. Dr. Colbert recommends cutting back if your skin starts to feel too dry. "This can cause another set of problems that can lead to more breakouts," he warns.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Benzoyl peroxide can bleach fabric, so be careful if applying at bedtime. If you use it on your neck or chest, be sure to wear an old T-shirt—and you may want to put away the nice pillowcases.

## DID YOU KNOW?

A 2004 study published in *The Lancet* found benzoyl peroxide to be just as effective as prescription antibiotics.



**PETER THOMAS ROTH  
MEDICATED BPO 10%  
ACNE WASH**

This medicated cleanser contains benzoyl peroxide in a creamy cleanser designed for the face, neck, chest and décolletage. Note: To start, alternate with a nonmedicated cleanser every other day. \$32; [peterthomasroth.com](http://peterthomasroth.com)



**DDF BENZOYL PEROXIDE GEL 5%  
WITH TEA TREE OIL**

In addition to benzoyl peroxide, this anti-pimple gel contains tea tree oil, known for its antiseptic properties. \$24; [ddf.com](http://ddf.com)



**PROACTIV SOLUTION**

The key to all of the Proactiv success stories is benzoyl peroxide. The core system features Renewing Cleanser, Revitalizing Toner and Repairing Lotion, and contains low levels of prescription-grade benzoyl peroxide to attack the bacteria that lead to breakouts. \$39.95; [proactiv.com](http://proactiv.com)

# benzoyl peroxide vs. salicylic acid CONTINUED



Whether you experience occasional hormone-related breakouts or are plagued by chronic acne, benzoyl peroxide and salicylic acid are often the first lines of defense. Dr. Colbert explains that, "60 to 70 percent of my patients come in with acne symptoms, and there is no consistent age." Whether you're in your 20s or 50s, these treatments can help keep blemishes under control, leaving you with clear, radiant skin. But Dr. Rodan warns, "In some patients it takes trial and error to find the best treatment program." And remember, your dermatologist has prescription options if a topical over-the-counter program fails.

## > combination treatments

"The best scenario for treating acne is combination treatment with both salicylic acid and benzoyl peroxide," says Dr. Rodan. These ingredients work together to unclog pores and reduce acne-causing bacteria. Dr. Colbert advises patients to use common sense and see how your skin reacts. "If you are too dry, your skin may produce more oil to compensate, and this can lead to further breakouts."

### THE LATEST PRESCRIPTION OPTIONS

When over-the-counter treatment doesn't work, ask your dermatologist about these newcomers to the acne-treatment scene.

**ZIANA** This new topical gel combines the cell-turnover boosting effects of tretinoin with the antibiotic clindamycin.

**SOLODYN** An oral antibiotic, Solodyn contains minocycline, but is dosed according to weight for the treatment of mild to severe cystic acne.

**YAZ** This birth control pill just received FDA approval for the treatment of acne.



### SKINMEDICA ACNE CARE SYSTEM

This three-part system consists of a foaming wash and toner that contain salicylic acid, and a benzoyl peroxide lotion featuring a delivery system that targets P. acnes deep within the skin. **\$100; visit [skinmedica.com](http://skinmedica.com) for a physician near you**

### ACNERECOVERY

For customized acne treatment at home, AcneRecovery utilizes salicylic acid in the morning and benzoyl peroxide at night for maximum results with minimal irritation. The two-step system allows you to adjust the strength of each medication based on how your skin responds and the severity of your breakout on any given day. **\$99; [nordstrom.com](http://nordstrom.com)**

