



## GROOMING

# Do I Really Need to Exfoliate My Skin?

By Mikelle Street



It can be difficult to keep up with all of the advice on how to keep your skin healthy. Using a face wash and not a soap, for instance, or rubbing yourself down with activated charcoal to fix oily skin. Through all of that, though, showering stayed simple — pretty much the same since we started using showers. But that might be poised to change, too, with a move toward daily body exfoliation. Here's how to know if it should be part of your morning routine.

## What is body exfoliation?

First of all, the idea of exfoliation isn't new. It's "the use of either physical exfoliants, like crystals, or chemical exfoliants, like acids, to remove dead skin," says Dr. Macrene Alexiades, a New York-based dermatologist. In other words, your body constantly makes new skin cells. Exfoliation is the process of clearing the dead ones away.

When we clear dead skin away, it helps speed up how our skin renews, making us look more revitalized and healthier, says Dr. Marko Lens, a plastic surgeon who specializes in anti-aging treatments. After exfoliation, skin should appear brighter, softer, and healthier. Without exfoliation, dead cell buildup can make your skin look weathered and cracked, which makes sense: You're basically wearing a suit of dead cells.

When we talk about exfoliation, we're usually referring to techniques for clearing dead skin from your lips, or from your feet or hands as during pedicures and manicures. In the past it's been mostly marketed to women. But guy-centric salons are getting hip to the idea. [Grooming Lounge's](#) services for men turns up treatments like the GL Signature Manicure, a foot treatment, and various types of facials, all of which include some sort of exfoliation. Some skincare companies have developed at-home exfoliation products, like Baxter of California's [Exfoliating Body Bar](#), Menscience's [Buff Body Gloves](#), and, most recently, Procter & Gamble's [Duo](#).

"[Our] team looked globally at things that people use to exfoliate their bodies when bathing — we looked at rags and netted puffs and even pumice stones, which are popular in China," says Jamie Stahl, P&G principal scientist, about the Duo, which was rolled out in P&G brands Old Spice, Ivory, and Olay this month. "As we designed the Duo, we tried to find that perfect balance of exfoliating implements or texture that would allow the consumer to give the right pressure and the right angle of the little scrubbers."

Feet, hands, and lips aren't the only places where you stack up a surplus of dead dermis. You can get a buildup on your elbows and knees, too. And for that, you need something more versatile than an exfoliating face scrub — which is where all of those exfoliating body scrubbers come into play. But even if products like the Duo are marketed for everyday use, that doesn't necessarily mean daily exfoliation is right for you.

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"Men don't need to use any more than a washcloth or their hands over their face with a gentle wash," says Dr. David Colbert, founder of the New York Dermatology Group.

Doing much more than that could actually damage your skin. "By doing too much exfoliation, there is a risk that we remove good lipids from the skin and compromise a function of the skin barrier which is important to protect us from the environmental assaults," Lens says. According to Stahl, this could look like redness, rough skin, or chafing after exfoliating.

## So what should I be doing?

Like any good dermatologist will tell you, just pay attention to your skin. Exfoliating scrubbers, like a pumice stone or the rough side of the Duo, could irritate people with sensitive skin, leaving them feeling dry, stretched, or chafed. At the same time, maybe you just naturally grow a ton of skin and you constantly need to exfoliate. To each their own. If you have no idea how your skin will react, get something like the Duo that works on both types of skin.