

REAL SIMPLE

The 10 Best Toners for Acne-Prone Skin of 2024, According to Dermatologists

Plus, get expert advice on how to shop for toner like a pro.

By [Naydeline Mejia](#) September 26, 2024



When crafting the perfect skincare routine, there's one product you may be overlooking: [a facial toner](#). In addition to serving as a base layer that helps your serums and moisturizer absorb better into your skin, facial toners can be great for acne-prone skin in particular as they work to help balance the skin's pH and remove dirt and makeup.

To narrow down the best toners for [acne-prone skin](#), we reviewed and researched a variety of options, considering factors such as active ingredients, formulation, size, and value.

For expert tips on choosing the right acne-fighting toner and which ingredients to avoid, we also tapped board-certified dermatologist [Dr. Connie Yang, MD, FAAD](#) of [PFRANKMD by Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank](#).

Best Overall

Paula's Choice Skin Perfecting 2% BHA Liquid Exfoliant



This fan-favorite facial toner is all over social media, but unlike many viral skincare trends, this one's actually worth buying into, according to dermatologists. Paula's Choice BHA Liquid Exfoliant contains 2% salicylic acid, which is great for those who struggle with blackheads and clogged pores, [Dr. Yang](#) says.

This gentle formula is great for anyone who's acne-prone but especially for those with normal to oily skin. [Dr. Yang](#) recommends starting off by incorporating this facial toner into your skincare regimen one to two times a week.

Best for Hormonal Acne

The Ordinary Glycolic Acid Exfoliating Toner



The Ordinary is a fan-favorite skincare brand for their clinically formulated and affordable products. The Ordinary's Glycolic Acid 7% Exfoliating Toner is specifically formulated to target dullness, any skin texture irregularities, and uneven skin tone.

Glycolic acid, an AHA, is a chemical exfoliant that is ideal for those with hormonal acne as it helps prevent clogged pores due to excess sebum.

"The primary cause of hormonal acne is the fluctuation of hormones like testosterone, which trigger an increase in oil production," **Dr. Yang** says. As a result, topical treatments that target sebum production, clogged pores, and inflammation can be helpful.

Best for Scars and Dark Spots

REN Clean Skincare Ready Steady Glow Tonic



Dr. Yang recommends REN Clean Skincare's Ready Steady Glow Daily AHA Tonic not only for its acne-fighting properties, which visibly tighten pores and smooth the skin texture, but also for its gentle formula which targets dark spots and hyperpigmentation.

This facial toner contains lactic acid, an AHA that removes dulling dead skin cells and evens out skin tone, and azelaic acid precursors, which brighten the skin and decrease pigmentation from post-acne scarring, **Dr. Yang** says.

Best Korean

Cosrx AHA/BHA Clarifying Treatment Toner



COSRX's AHA/BHA Clarifying Treatment Toner is a Korean beauty favorite thanks to its exfoliating and purifying properties. In case you didn't know, AHAs (alpha-hydroxy acids) and BHAs (beta-hydroxy acids) are powerful chemical exfoliants that help stave off dead skin cells from the top skin layer to promote a brighter, clearer appearance.

BHAs also help to control oil production and minimize the look of pores. "The combination of AHAs and BHAs not only helps treat acne but also exfoliates to fade post-acne dark spots," **Dr. Yang** says

How to Shop for Toners for Acne-Prone Skin Like a Pro

Skin Type

While most of these active ingredients may be suitable for all acne-prone skin, it's important to consider your individual skin type and concerns when shopping for toner, as this will determine which solutions might work best for you.

- **Dry or Sensitive Skin:** For those with sensitive skin, also look for soothing ingredients like niacinamide, aloe vera, and centella asiatica, [Dr. Yang](#) adds. She also loves recommending sulfur for this skin type because it tends to be more well-tolerated than other acne-fighting ingredients like benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid, which can be more irritating.
- **Oily Skin:** Sulfur is also a great acne-fighting ingredient for oily skin, as it has antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties to kill acne-causing bacteria and soothe angry pimples. It also helps absorb excess oil and keep the pores clear, [Dr. Yang](#) says.

Questions You Might Ask

Should acne-prone skin use toner?

Toners are a quick and easy way to incorporate active ingredients into your skincare routine to target specific skin concerns, such as acne, [Dr. Yang](#) affirms. If you have acne-prone skin, using a non-comedogenic toner that contains acne-fighting ingredients can work wonders for your skin's barrier and help get rid of blemishes, she adds.

Is a salicylic acid toner good for acne?

As mentioned above, yes, a salicylic acid based toner can be very helpful for acne-prone skin, [Dr. Yang](#) says. In addition to preventing the buildup of dead skin cells that contribute to clogged pores and breakouts, it also helps protect the skin against future blackheads and whiteheads.

Should you use astringents for acne-prone skin?

Astringents are solutions that remove excess oil from the skin and cause the skin tissue to shrink or contract, creating a temporary tightening effect that shrinks the appearance of pores, say the experts.

"I do not recommend using an astringent regularly," [Dr. Yang](#) says, "as it can be very harsh and drying on the skin, even for those with oily skin."

Take Our Word for It

For this article, we researched a variety of facial toners for acne-prone skin, considering factors such as active ingredients, skin type, value, and size. We also spoke to [Dr. Connie Yang, MD, FAAD](#), board-certified dermatologist based in New York City.