

The 14 Best Acne Spot Treatments That Zap Pimples, According to Dermatologists

Including expert insight into the safest pore-clearing ingredients to use right now.

By **JAMIE WILSON, CLAIRE SULLIVAN** NOVEMBER 8, 2024



When breakouts pop up out of nowhere at the most inopportune times, your best bet at damage control is selecting an acne spot treatment to quash pimples quickly. These potent topical serums and creams contain a high concentration of acne-fighting active ingredients to tamp down inflammation and clear clogged pores in record time.

Acne treatments have been in the news following a **Valisure report** that cited elevated levels of benzene in benzoyl peroxide acne products, however the verdict is out on whether or not you should avoid the ingredient. “Generally benzoyl peroxide is considered a safe product, unless you are storing these agents in hot places or using them for long periods of time after storage, in general [it] should not be a problem,” says board-certified dermatologist **Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank**. The good news: There are plenty of clean formulas available that rely on ingredients other than benzoyl peroxide, including options that enlist naturally-derived witch hazel or willow bark to zap acne.

What to Know About Benzoyl Peroxide in Acne Treatments

“Benzoyl peroxide is considered generally safe at appropriate dosages by the FDA and has been deemed eligible to be over the counter for a long time, but when exposed to high temperatures for extensive periods of time benzoyl peroxide can turn into benzene, which is a very well known carcinogen that can cause various problems and various types of cancers,” explains **Dr. Frank**.

Should this be a cause for concern? “Well, yes and no,” says **Dr. Frank**. His advice is to store your products in a cool place and make sure you’re not using them after long periods of time after storage.

Dr. Frank notes that “even without the production of carcinogens, benzoyl peroxide along with other acne ingredients can cause irritation, sun sensitivity, and other medical and aesthetic issues, plus there are a lot of other options for people that are sensitive to benzoyl peroxide or are worried about the concern of increased benzene levels.” He notes that salicylic acid, oral medications, and lasers and light sources are options for those who want to minimize chemical exposure while treating their acne.

“For now, I would avoid the products listed until further data comes out, but I wouldn’t give up on benzoyl peroxide or other over-the-counter beauty products that have been around for a while either,” **Dr. Frank** says.

Meet the Experts



Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank is a board-certified dermatologist, skincare consultant, and founder of the bespoke aesthetic healthcare brand **PFRANKMD**. In over 20 years of private practice, he has become a world-renowned expert in minimally invasive cosmetic surgery.