

# VOGUE

## The Best Blackhead Removers to Help Decongest Pores for Clearer, Smoother Skin

BY EMILY OROFINO



Like whiteheads, blackheads are caused by a blend of dead skin cells and excess sebum trapped within the pore, but the pore remains open, allowing you to see the gunk inside. That's also what gives blackheads their characteristic appearance, says [Dr. Connie Yang](#), board-certified dermatologist at [PFRANKMD](#) by [Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank](#) in New York, NY. "When this mixture becomes exposed to oxygen, it oxidizes and turns dark in color," she explains. Blackheads can be caused by myriad factors, including pore-clogging beauty products, excess oil production, and genetics.

While many people will be tempted to manually extract their blemishes at home, it's typically best to leave the job to a professional (with some exceptions), as improper technique and unsterilized tools are a recipe for infection, scarring, or both. You can help improve the appearance of enlarged pores and blackheads by using an exfoliant, which will smooth out uneven texture. Alternatively, try a mask with clay or charcoal as a temporary fix, says **Dr. Yang**. "They work by drawing out impurities, oil, and other debris from the pores."

## Best Spot Treatment: COSRX Master Patch Intensive



- **Why We Love It:** While we're big fans of most pimple patches, these are our favorite due to their inclusion of active ingredients (most are simply hydrocolloid stickers) and their design. Not only are there two different-size patches in each set, the patches themselves are incredibly thin, to the point that you'll forget that you've applied them. They're comfortable and practically disappear into the skin, making for an incognito way to protect and treat a whitehead or blackhead during waking hours. "Just don't leave these on for longer than six to eight hours at a time, as this can cause local irritation or even chemical burns," warns **Dr. Yang**.

## Best Mask: Caudalie Instant Detox Mask



- **Why We Love It:** When you need your pores to look clearer and tighter *stat*, give this formula a try. "This fast-acting clay mask absorbs excess oil and impurities to clear blackheads and tighten the appearance of pores," says **Dr. Yang**. "When used regularly, it can help regulate excess oil production and keep skin looking clear." The star ingredients here are oil-absorbing clays (including kaolin and bentonite) and the brand's signature grapeseed polyphenols, which provide free radical protection as well as combat sebum oxidation—the reason blackheads appear dark.

# Best Retinoid: Differin Gel Adapalene 0.1% Acne Treatment



- **Why We Love It:** Fun fact: Differin is one of the first prescription retinoids to be made available over the counter, meaning you're getting clinical treatment from a drugstore formula. "Adapalene is an excellent option for all types of acne, but especially effective for blackheads and whiteheads," says **Dr. Yang**. "It increases cell turnover, preventing dead skin cells from clogging pores." And, unlike prescription retinoin, it's less sensitizing to the skin. Just be aware that it won't work overnight: "It can take several weeks of consistent use to start seeing results, but the benefits are well worth the wait," **Dr. Yang** adds.

## Best Peel: Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare Alpha Beta Universal Daily Peel Pads

- **Why We Love It:** We've been using this formula for over a decade and it remains as effective as ever, keeping our skin clear, smooth, and glowy with two simple swipes. "The combination of AHAs and BHA give an immediate glow, but also provide gradual improvement in breakouts and texture with consistent use," says **Dr. Yang**. They're perfect for frequent travelers (the two-step treatment is delivered via two solution-soaked towelettes, so no leaks!).



## How to Prevent Blackheads

Any doctor will tell you that prevention is better than cure. "Preventing blackheads requires a consistent skin-care routine that involves gentle exfoliation and non-comedogenic skin-care products," says **Dr. Yang**. "Retinoids are an excellent ingredient to incorporate, as they help reduce oil production, regulate cell turnover and prevent dead skin cells from accumulating in the pores."

Lastly, you can consider seeking professional help from a dermatologist or plastic surgeon, who offer potent in-office procedures to keep skin clear. “There are lasers that target oil production to reduce blackhead formation over time [such as AviClear and Aerolase], chemical peels to deeply exfoliate, and treatments like HydraFacial to cleanse and extract impurities from the pores,” says [Dr. Yang](#).

## Meet the Experts

- [Dr. Connie Yang](#) is a board-certified dermatologist at [PFRANKMD](#) by [Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank](#) in New York, NY.