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10 Expert-Approved Ways to Fade Acne Scars Stat



You finally figured out how to keep your acne at bay. But where you expected to see clear skin, you see hyperpigmentation as a result of acne scars. It just doesn't seem fair.

Acne scars occur when not enough collagen is synthesized in a specific spot where you had a breakout, says **Manish Shah, MD, FACS, a board-certified plastic surgeon in Denver**. As a result, you may end up with discoloration and uneven texture. The good news: With proper treatment, it's possible to improve acne scarring by addressing the damage in the dermis where the inflammation begins, he explains.

Of course, the exact treatment plan and how long it takes depends on a few variables, including your age, how long your bouts with acne were, how deep the scar is, and the sensitivity of your skin, says Shah. For the most accurate picture of what your treatment plan should look like, he recommends visiting a dermatologist or a plastic surgeon who can assess your specific needs and recommend a treatment plan that could include easy at-home remedies or, for more serious cases, in-office treatments.

For less severe cases, your dermatologist may recommend one or more of the following at-home options.

Lactic Acid

The Ordinary Lactic Acid 10% + HA (\$7)

In studies, in-office lactic acid peels done once every two weeks for three months improved the skin's texture and pigmentation and lightened acne scars. But you don't have to go to the dermatologist's office to reap the benefits. Plenty of liquid exfoliants contain the ingredient.

Sunday Riley Good Genes All-in-One Lactic Acid Treatment (\$122)

Alpha Hydroxy Acid (AHA)

Glossier Solution (\$24)

Alpha hydroxy acid (AHA) is another liquid exfoliant that works to slough off dead skin cells and promote new cell turnover, thus reducing the hyperpigmentation and texturing caused by acne scars, says Anna Guanche, MD, a board-certified dermatologist in Los Angeles.

Paula's Choice Skin Perfecting 8% AHA Lotion Exfoliant (\$30)

Salicylic Acid

Origins Super Spot Remover Acne Treatment Gel (\$19)

Because of its antibacterial properties, salicylic acid is often used to treat active breakouts, but it's also a mild exfoliant that works to encourage cell turnover,

says [Sonia Batra, MD](#), a board-certified dermatologist and co-host of *The Doctors*.

Mario Badescu [Drying Lotion](#) (\$17)

Vitamin C Serum

Kiehl's [Powerful-Strength Line-Reducing Concentrate Serum](#) (\$68)

A good vitamin C serum—one that contains between 15% to 20% L-ascorbic acid—not only works to boost skin radiance and improve texture but also visibly reduces the appearance of fine lines, says [Isippora Shainhouse, MD](#), a board-certified dermatologist in Los Angeles.

Versed [Stroke of Brilliance Brightening Serum](#) (\$20)

Retinoids

SkinCeuticals [Retinol 0.3](#) (\$67)

Over-the-counter creams and serums that contain retinol—a form of retinoid that doesn't require a prescription—have been shown to reduce discoloration and make acne scars less visible.

Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare [Ferulic Acid + Retinol Brightening Solution](#) (\$88)

Red Light Therapy

QuasarMD [Plus](#) (\$399)

There's growing research that suggests red light therapy not only builds collagen but also diminishes scarring—both important components for minimizing acne scars. Though quite pricey, today there are a growing number of red light therapy devices, like masks, suitable for at-home use.

Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare [Spectralite Faceware Pro](#) (\$435)

Unfortunately, though, some acne scars get to a level of depth where at-home treatments don't deliver desired results or would take a very long time to do so, says Shah. In these cases, your dermatologist may recommend one or more of the following in-office treatments.

Peels

Chemical peels work to remove the top layer of the skin, opening the door for new skin to resurface smoother than before, says Shah.

Micro-Needling

During this treatment, your doctor will introduce a roller with small needles or a handheld pen device on the surface of the affected spots where your skin's texture is indented from the scarring, says Shah. The roller penetrates the skin, prompting the skin to infuse more collagen into the area to smooth the texture during the healing process.

Laser Treatments

Laser resurfacing works by removing the top layer of skin by disseminating short beams of light in the affected region, says Shah. The two most common lasers used in this treatment are carbon dioxide and erbium. The technique works to eliminate skin cells in the treatment area.

Dermabrasion

This is a technique that uses a special rotating device that exfoliates the outer layer of the skin as if you were polishing a surface, says Shah. This works to clear the skin of the damaged cells, prompting it to create more collagen in the healing process.

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