

# VOGUE

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

BY EMILY OROFINO November 21, 2024



Blackheads may have gotten cutesy rebrands over the years—”strawberry nose,” for example—but they’re anything but charming, prompting leagues of skin-care shoppers to seek out the best blackhead removers. Unfortunately, blackheads can be quite stubborn spots to treat: Though they look like little specks of dirt, they’re actually blemishes. “Blackheads are a form of acne that causes small, dark bumps, most commonly on the nose, neck, and chin,” says [Dr. Sean Alemi](#), double-board-certified facial plastic and reconstructive surgeon in New York, NY.

### Best Overall: Paula’s Choice Skin Perfecting 2% BHA Liquid Exfoliant

• **Why We Love It:** This iconic formula is a must-try when you’re managing blackheads. “It effectively unclogs pores to leave skin smooth and brighter,” says [Dr. Alemi](#). It does so with two percent salicylic acid, which he notes is powerful yet gentle enough for all skin types to use; the addition of green tea extract provides additional soothing properties. What we like in particular about this formula is how easy it is to integrate into a routine—it has the consistency of water and absorbs rapidly into the skin after cleansing, so you can apply your favorite serums and moisturizers on top without pilling.



### Best For Nose: ZitSticka Goo Getter Nose Clarifying Pore & Blemish Strips



• **Why We Love It:** These aren’t the nose strips of your youth—you know, the ones that you ripped off your skin to reveal a blackhead graveyard. While those could be very harsh (and, in our experience, made our blackheads worse in the long run), these actually pamper your skin. “The hydrocolloid absorbs extra fluid from the blackhead while the salicylic acid, tea tree, niacinamide and vitamin C work together to unclog pores, soothe stressed skin and accelerate skin renewal,” says [Dr. Alemi](#). Just slap one on before bed to wake up to clearer skin.

## Best Salicylic Acid Cleanser: La Roche-Posay Effaclar Medicated Gel Cleanser



- **Why We Love It:** Dr. Kobets and [Dr. Alemi](#) both recommend this salicylic acid-infused formula from La Roche-Posay. “It’s gentle enough for everyday use to reduce excess oil production to help clear blackheads,” says [Dr. Alemi](#). The blemish-busting active helps slough away the dead skin cells that contribute to clogged pores, while hydrating glycerin prevents your skin from feeling tight and dehydrated post-cleanse. Note—the formula contains menthol—which though it provides a refreshing cooling sensation, it could irritate very sensitive skin.

## Best For Mature Skin: SkinCeuticals Blemish + Age Defense

- **Why We Love It:** If you, like us, are dealing with pimples, blackheads, *and* signs of aging, this SkinCeuticals serum may be your savior. “It combines salicylic, glycolic and citric acids to exfoliate skin, refine pores, and reduce breakouts as it smooths and minimizes the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles,” explains [Dr. Alemi](#). It also contains little-known dioic acid, which helps regulate sebum production and combat bacteria for added insurance against blemishes.



## 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.” [Dr. Alemi](#) recommends washing your face every morning and evening, as well as after sweating, ideally using a cleanser with exfoliating ingredients, to keep skin clear. “If you have oily hair, I recommend regularly washing your hair, and changing your pillowcase at least once a week to remove any hair oil that may get on your face when you sleep,” he adds.

## Meet the Experts

- [Dr. Sean Alemi](#) is a double-board-certified facial plastic and reconstructive surgeon in New York, NY.