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# ARE YOU CONSTANTLY PICKING AT YOUR SKIN?

If the answer is yes (and you can't figure out why your breakouts won't go away), you need to make a conscious effort to stop. Nothing good comes out of prodding at your skin—leave the extractions to the professionals who know the right way to pop a pimple.

## 2

### THE BREAKOUT MAY NOT GO AWAY

Most people think that popping a pimple will instantly make it go away. But, that's not always the case. Whatever is lodged within the pore can get pushed down deeper inside—it's like giving a pimple more stamina to stick around. According to Orlando, FL, dermatologist Kathleen W. Judge, MD, picking increases the redness and inflammation that comes with breakouts. "The redness can persist even longer if the capillaries are damaged," she says. While makeup may camouflage a pimple, be sure to use products that are water-based and noncomedogenic (so they don't further clog your pores) and fully wash it off. Otherwise, your makeup can add fuel to the fire.

## 3

### YOU CAN MAKE A SMALL PIMPLE FESTER INTO SOMETHING MUCH BIGGER

Inflammation is part of the recipe for a breakout, and the force placed on your skin by trying to squeeze a pimple (especially if it's one that's under the skin, or cystic acne) can actually cause more inflammation to ensue. "When you pop a pimple that has not yet come to the surface, you're causing the pimple to rupture underneath your skin, and numerous inflammatory cells come in to try and clean up the mess," says Alpine, UT, dermatologist Cheryl Lee Eberting, MD. Once you aggravate tissue that's already inflamed, you can end up with a pimple that's drastically larger or redder.

## 4

### YOU CAN RIP YOUR SKIN

This one holds true for trying to extract a pimple with your nails or a tool or something else—leave it to the pros. "Picking puts pressure on the inflamed tissue and oil glands, which may cause the gland to rupture under the surface, releasing dirt, oil, debris and bacteria. When this happens, a more severe inflammatory reaction occurs and a deeper infection results, too," says Dr. Judge. The pimple can also take longer to heal and the risk of scarring is increased.

## 5

### A SCAB CAN FORM

Pimple or not, any time anything on your skin is opened up (be it by force or naturally), your body sends a signal to your skin that an injury has occurred, sending your skin into healing mode. The same process happens when you try to pop a pimple, which can ultimately lead to a scab. Dr. Sciales says that when you pick a pimple that hasn't come to a head, the blemish is likely to bleed and turn into a wound. "Like any wound, when it scabs, if you pick off the scab, it can lead to scarring," he adds.

## 6

### YOUR SKIN CAN SCAR

Whenever skin is damaged, a scar can form. "For those who suffer from adult acne and can't stop digging at their skin—especially those deep 'undergrounders'—I always tell them that their skin will look 50 percent better just by not picking at their face," says Dr. Eberting. "Picking leads to excessive inflammation, which in turn creates self-induced scarring and pigment issues that linger long after the pimple has healed."

## 7

### YOU CAN CAUSE PERMANENT DAMAGE

As if discoloration from a breakout isn't bad enough, picking at and popping pimples—particularly the nodular, cystic type—can damage the collagen in your skin and cause permanent scarring. While it's difficult to treat acne scars, it's not impossible thanks to treatments that soften out the scars like microneedling, Bellafill (a semi-permanent injectable that fills in scars) and resurfacing lasers. Other options include chemical peels, microdermabrasion and surgical subcision (a needle is used to loosen the scarred skin from the deeper layers of skin underneath), or a combination of any two.

GREG DELVES/JUDY CASEY