# Dermatologists warn of infection and irritation risks with popular pimple patches



Over the past few years, pimple patches have emerged as a popular skincare trend, embraced by a range of celebrities and widely adopted by young people across social media platforms. Originating around three years ago, these brightly coloured stickers are designed to cover blemishes and are touted not only for concealing pimples but also for actively treating them by reducing their size and redness. High-profile figures such as Hailey and Justin Bieber, Millie Bobby Brown, Florence Pugh, Kim Kardashian, and her daughter North West have all been seen sporting the patches, further fueling their viral success.

The patches commonly feature a layer of hydrocolloid, a specialised wound dressing intended to keep the skin moist, along with ingredients such as salicylic acid, known for its acne-fighting properties. However, top dermatologists have recently raised concerns about the safety and efficacy of these patches, indicating that they might do more harm than good.

Renowned dermatologist Dr Kenneth Mark spoke exclusively to the Daily Mail about the downsides of the patches, highlighting two principal risks: infection and irritation. Dr Mark explained, “One of the things you really have to be careful of when you're using a hydrocolloid bandage is sometimes the wound gets too wet,” which can lead to infection. He noted, “the patient comes for follow up, and you can smell the odor across the room,” underscoring the severity of such infections.

In addition to infection risks, Dr Mark also pointed out the potential for skin irritation caused by the salicylic acid in the patches. While safe in controlled applications, the acid can become overly potent when trapped against the skin under the patch, leading to amplified irritation or even chemical burns. Dr Mark recounted a case where a patient’s spot became more inflamed after applying a patch, saying, “I had a patient who didn't even want to go to school because her spot was so red... my first thought was that the patch made it even worse and caused more inflammation.”

Board-certified dermatologist Dr Muneeb Shah, founder of skincare line Remedy, also shared his perspective with the Daily Mail. He expressed concerns about how some users have been applying the patches excessively, sometimes covering large areas of the face or using multiple patches simultaneously. He cautioned, “the skin needs to exfoliate itself. Like people say, ‘your skin needs to breathe.’”

Despite these warnings, the trend continues to flourish online. There are over 110,000 TikTok videos tagged with #pimplepatches, including clips showing users with colourful star-shaped and dotted patches covering large portions of their faces, which they then peel off to reveal the acne beneath.

Social media influencers such as Charli D’Amelio and model Ella Emhoff have also featured these patches in their content, maintaining the product’s strong presence in popular culture. Even so, some social media voices offer caution; for instance, a nursing graduate warned followers that using these patches essentially tears off the whitehead of a pimple, leaving an open wound behind.

The patches are widely accessible, with prices ranging from approximately $5 to $10 at most pharmacies. Nevertheless, Dr Mark recommends a more cautious approach, advising people to wash their faces with gentle cleansers and seek professional advice if acne becomes problematic. His advice to the Daily Mail was clear: “Watch out for infection, watch out for irritation, watch out for these things not working, and be careful.”

As the use of pimple patches continues to increase globally, dermatologists urge users to be mindful of the potential complications these products can present, weighing the convenience and aesthetic appeal against possible adverse effects.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://time.com/7261586/do-pimple-patches-work/> - This article confirms that pimple patches, particularly hydrocolloid types, have become popular in recent years and are widely used by teens and adults to reduce the size, texture, and redness of pimples, supporting the claim about their efficacy and popularity among young people and social media users.
2. <https://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/acne/what-are-hydrocolloid-patches-for-pimples> - WebMD explains that pimple patches usually contain a hydrocolloid layer that keeps the skin moist and promotes healing, and may include acne-fighting ingredients like salicylic acid, backing the article's description of their composition and function.
3. <https://www.acs.org/education/chemmatters/articles/pimple-patches-and-what-they-offer.html> - The American Chemical Society discusses how pimple patches help decrease inflammation by absorbing fluids from pimples, which aligns with the article's information about patches reducing redness and swelling.
4. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33651470/> - This clinical study highlights the safety and efficacy of hydrocolloid acne patches compared to other patches, supporting the article's mention of their use and the presence of active ingredients that assist in acne treatment.
5. <https://www.healthline.com/health/beauty-skin-care/pimple-patches> - Healthline warns about possible skin irritation and advises on proper use of pimple patches, echoing Dr. Kenneth Mark’s concerns about infection and irritation risks associated with prolonged or improper use of patches.
6. <https://www.self.com/story/pimple-patches-skin-care-experts-caution> - This article features expert dermatologists who discuss the downsides of pimple patches, including risks of irritation, infection, and excessive usage, thus corroborating the concerns raised by Dr. Kenneth Mark and Dr. Muneeb Shah regarding safety and application.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14648527/pimple-patches-skincare-dangers.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data