

COSMOPOLITAN

Butt Acne: How to Get Rid of Folliculitis and Pimples on Your Butt Fast

Thankfully, it's pretty easy to treat.



Meet the experts

- ◆ **Neda Mehr**, MD, is a board-certified dermatologist and medical director at [Pure Dermatology Cosmetic & Hair Center](#). Dr. Mehr is also a Mohs surgeon, media expert, and the founder of [DermBx](#) skincare products.
- ◆ **Shereene Idriss**, MD, is a board-certified dermatologist and founder of [Idriss Dermatology](#). Dr. Idriss, aka [Pillowtalk Derm](#), is a clinical instructor in dermatology at the [Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai](#).
- ◆ **Tiffany Libby**, MD, is a board-certified dermatologist and Mohs surgeon based in Rhode Island.
- ◆ **Morgan Rabach**, MD, is a board-certified dermatologist and cofounder of [LM Medical NYC](#). Dr. Rabach is also a clinical assistant professor of dermatology at the [Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai](#).

What causes acne on the butt?



The short version? Acne is the result of an overproduction of oil. The long version? Board-certified dermatologist Neda Mehr, MD, breaks it down: **Our oil glands are mainly triggered by one of four factors, which are hormones, stress, genetics, and diet.** These four triggers send a signal to the oil glands to get bigger, and when the oil gland gets bigger, the channel that delivers the oil does, too.

Acne vs. folliculitis

◆ What acne looks like:

“Acne is defined by having comedones, which are blackheads and whiteheads,” says Dr. Rabach. Basically, **acne looks like...acne**. A mix of little whiteheads, maybe some blackheads, maybe a cystic zit, maybe some painful, inflamed bumps.

◆ What folliculitis looks like:

“Folliculitis has a hair in the center of a red bump, and the white material associated with the bump is often dead skin and white blood cells,” says Dr. Rabach. It might look like a small whitehead, but **usually, it won't be just a single bump**—you'll likely have a smattering of same-size, whitehead-looking bumps (and no blackheads).

That said, there *are* instances where patients do get real zits on their butts (Dr. Mehr says this is usually in patients that have a history of facial acne, too), which is why both Dr. Rabach and board-certified dermatologist Shereene Idriss, MD, agree that you should see a derm to find out exactly what's really going on and properly treat it.

Why do I get pimples on my bum cheeks?



In short, **anything that causes friction can cause these butt bumps**. “Common culprits are irritation from clothes rubbing against the buttocks, like tight gym clothes that can trap in sweat, oil, and bacteria, and friction or occlusion from sitting for prolonged periods,” Dr. Libby explains. For folliculitis, specifically, Dr. Mehr says things that inflame the hair follicle, like harsh skincare products, an allergic reaction (for instance, an allergy to the nickel in a shaving razor), or bacterial overgrowth could be the reason.

How to get rid of butt acne fast:



2. Exfoliate your skin—but don't scrub it

While you may be tempted to exfoliate the hell out of your bumpy butt, leave the grainy physical scrubs alone. Instead, Dr. Mehr suggests using a gentle silicone scrubber (silicone repels bacteria) while in the shower and an exfoliating wipe once you hop out and dry off. Dr. Idriss also recommends **swiping on a gentle chemical exfoliator**, which uses ingredients like alpha-hydroxy acids (such as lactic or glycolic acids) or beta-hydroxy acids (salicylic acid) to keep dead skin cells from clogging your pores. Our faves:

3. Shower with a tea tree body wash

Another ingredient Dr. Mehr recommends scrubbing down with is tea tree (Trader Joe's Tea Tree Body Wash is a fave), which **has antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties**. Use your silicone shower brush to cleanse with the tea tree wash, followed by the benzoyl peroxide body wash to really kill off the bacteria.

7. Change out of sweaty clothes

Say it with me: Activewear is not loungewear. **Take off your sweaty workout clothes as soon as you get home (or even sooner if you can)**. Wearing tight leggings made from synthetic fabric, sweating in them, and then sitting in them is one sure-fire way to get yourself some butt acne. Dr. Mehr explains that non-breathable fabrics “cause all that sweat with all that bacteria to hug your skin and form a cellophane-like barrier, and if you’re got a propensity for acne, that bacteria’s going to go inside the oil gland, and you’re going to get all these pimples on your butt.” Oh, and Dr. Rabach says the same goes for your wet swimsuits or any other damp clothing. Who likes sitting in swampy swimsuits anyway??

10. Get laser hair removal.



If you've never had acne and now out of nowhere you now have bumps on your butt, Dr. Mehr says it's more likely that your butt acne is actually folliculitis. “That bacteria, instead of having an entry into the inside world from a pore, got an entry into the inside world by tracking down a hair follicle,” Dr. Mehr explains. “So **the key with folliculitis is destroy the root of the hair follicle**. How? Laser hair removal.” Not only will lasering the hair away prevent folliculitis, but it also will help minimize scarring that can come from folliculitis caused by other methods of hair removal. Dr. Mehr explains that sugaring or waxing “basically allows the outside bacteria to get inside and cause pimples, which lead to scarring.”