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HEALTH NEWS

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Aspirin Can't Treat Acne, So Experts Say Don't Use Face Mask Touted on TikTok



Experts say aspirin has acidic qualities and can burn the skin if applied incorrectly on a person's face. Getty Images

- A TikTok video is showing teens how to apply a face mask made of aspirin as a treatment for acne.
- Experts say aspirin has acidic qualities and can burn the skin if applied incorrectly.
- They recommend people be cautious of any medical advice they see on any social media platform and consult medical professionals instead.

Kids, don't try this at home.

Seriously... don't.

That's doctors' orders after news broke recently of a viral TikTok video showing a user named Mallory Le mixing crushed aspirin with water.

The girl then smeared the resulting paste on her face like a mask as a cure for acne.

Almost every doctor contacted by Healthline used the term "bad idea" when hearing about the video.

"This is a bad idea," [Dr. Susan Bard](#), a board certified dermatologist and instructor at Weill Cornell Medicine and Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, told Healthline. "Aspirin is known for its anti-inflammatory properties. While aspirin — acetylsalicylic acid — appears to be the same as salicylic acid used to treat acne, they are different molecules.

"It's important to realize that aspirin is an acid and that applying such acid in an unregulated concentration can lead to chemical burns, dryness, and irritation," she added.

What aspirin can do to skin

The video shows Le taking two uncoated aspirin and dissolving them in water.

After she spreads the concoction on her face, she advises viewers to leave it on for 3 minutes before rinsing it away. She recommends users do so every few days.

The video was viewed 1.3 million times after being on TikTok for only 2 days.

"Using aspirin for the treatment of acne is a bad idea," [Dr. Yoram Harth](#), a board certified dermatologist and a former research fellow at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center in New York, told Healthline.

“Aspirin... is an oral medication used to reduce pain, fever, or inflammation. It cannot unclog the skin pores, cannot reduce sebum excretion, and has no proven effect on the prevention of future acne breakouts,” Harth said.

Even if it did, diluting it in water would likely render it useless.

Harth said one of the main advantages of salicylic acid in treating acne is that it’s fat soluble, which allows it to penetrate through skin to get to the skin’s oil glands, where it unclogs pores and reduces oil production.

“Aspirin is soluble in water, a significant downside for the ‘anti-acne’ product,” Harth said. “Acetylsalicylic acid, especially when used in a DIY mask, can be irritating and lead to redness and flaking. It isn’t really treating or preventing breakouts. Used in a mask, aspirin can be absorbed into the blood circulation and cause systemic side effects in people who are allergic to ibuprofen, or naproxen aspirin can trigger bronchospasm.”

Harth said children taking aspirin for what it’s designed should still be careful, especially those with flu symptoms.

“Salicylic acid, benzoyl peroxide treatment, and retinol-based treatment creams (have been) used for decades in acne treatment,” Harth said. “They are effective, safe, and very affordable. Don’t bother crushing up aspirin and spreading it on your face. It will only do more harm than good.”

Safety advice for any chemical peel

[Dr. Amir Karam](#), a plastic surgeon in San Diego and a TikTok contributor, told Healthline that people using do-it-yourself chemical peels can’t control the concentration of what they’re putting on their face.

“Making your own chemical peel is generally a bad idea... concentration is what allows the practitioner to know how deep the peel is going,” Karam said. “A highly concentrated chemical peel will create a physical burn to the skin and lead to scarring.”

Even if aspirin did work on acne — and it doesn’t — the DIY approach is inherently flawed, unless the user is a medical professional.

