

# Health

## Should You Try Lasers for Your Acne? Here's What an Expert Thinks

Can this laser treatment really zap zits? We asked the pros to weigh in.

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November 20, 2017

If you have acne, you know how debilitating it can be. Whether it's one breakout or a whole area of your face that's red and inflamed, acne takes a hit to your confidence. So a laser treatment that seemingly treats pimples could be enticing, but should you actually try it?

A London-based trainer named Maeve Walker went through an excruciating amount of pain after using Pixel, an in-office laser treatment that's marketed as being able to help clear acne scars and fine lines. Walker has been documenting her skincare journey with her 140,000 followers on Instagram, posting images of before, immediately after, and seven days after receiving the treatment. In the final photo, her skin appears totally clear and glowing.

"It has been 1 week since my Pixel Facial and I just took the super smiley selfie," Walker wrote in the caption. "The pain was agonising on day 1 but my [sic] day 3 the redness and swelling has started to go down. The laser left my skin super dry and sensitive."

The Instagram star told ThisIsInsider.com that while she's thrilled with the results, the process was less-than-pleasant. "I began to get a little agitated as smoke started to rise and I could literally smell my skin burning," Walker told the site. "By the time I got home I was in total agony and my face was burning, it felt like I was on fire."

This sounds scary, but while the scabbing and peeling the personal trainer experienced is normal after receiving this type of treatment, the pain she says she went through is unusual, says Michelle Yagoda, MD, a facial plastic surgeon in New York City who uses lasers in her practice. For most people, mild discomfort is more typical, Dr. Yagoda says.

Dr. Yagoda tells us that it's also important to note that this treatment won't actually *treat* acne: Pixel is a resurfacing laser that's best suited for helping heal acne scars, she says. By creating microscopic holes in the skin, new collagen is produced during the recovery process, which then helps to fill in indentations from past blemishes. If this sounds familiar, it may be because another Instagram star-beloved procedure, microneedling, rejuvenates skin in a similar way, only with tiny needles instead of lasers.

If you're dealing with breakouts, Joshua Zeichner, MD, director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, recommends a laser called the Isolaz. With this treatment, variable amounts of intense pulsed light are applied to kill acne-causing bacteria and reduce blood vessel dilation and inflammation surrounding each pimple, he explains.

Not ready to try a laser? Ask your dermatologist about an in-office chemical peel, which are a little more intense than what you can get OTC. Dr. Yagoda is a fan of TCA peels in particular; they utilize trichloroacetic acid to slough off the first layer of skin, leaving behind a smoother, brighter looking complexion.

For at-home treatments that use light, there are some great, affordable options out there. Our top picks: Neutrogena Light Therapy Acne Spot Treatment (\$20; amazon.com) and Neutrogena Light Therapy Mask (\$38; amazon.com). These drugstore devices use both blue and red light to help kill bacteria and bring down inflammation. The mask is a good choice for someone who needs to treat widespread breakouts (wear it for about 10 minutes a day), while the spot treatment is better for targeting specific problem areas.