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Safe to do yourself? Only with sterile tools and a gentle hand



If you press too hard or use unhygienic tools (like your fingers), popping a pimple can lead to infection and scarring. "I've seen patients who tattooed themselves after trying to sterilize a needle with a match and putting it on their face," warns Sobel. Don't want to be branded? Follow these tips to avoid being scarred for life. (See next page for advice on blackheads.)

-choose an easy target "Never try to pop a pimple if it's red and swollen and the tissue has thickened around it," says dermatologist David Sire of Fullerton, Calif. The easiest pimples to pop have a white head that can be easily ruptured without drawing blood.

-sterilize skin with rubbing alcohol Then use a sterilized lancet to gently nick the very tip of the pimple (if you use a needle, sterilize it first with rubbing alcohol). Allow the fluid to come out on its own. "If you press it, it may bleed," says Sire. Blot with a fresh tissue,

-finally, to prevent infection, apply benzoyl peroxide We recommend Clinique Emergency lotion (\$13.50; at dept. stores in June). Cover the area with a tiny bandage (like Curad Scar Therapy cosmetic pads, \$17, at drugstores) until the blemish has dried up.



don't be scarred!

How to make sure a messy breakout doesn't leave its mark

Superficial (red and flat) scars will eventually go away, says dermatologist David Goldberg of Skin Laser and Surgery Specialists of New York and New Jersey. To speed things up, get a Pulsed Dye laser treatment from your dermatologist (two to four sessions, \$200-\$500 each). "You'll have a black-and-blue mark for a week," says Goldberg. "Then 50 percent improvement." For ice-pick (small and deep) and saucerized (wide and shallow) scars, try: **surgical incision** The scar is cut out. Stitches last a week; redness, a month. Can improve scars by 50 percent. \$150-\$1,000 **cool touch laser** Goldberg's favorite, this new technology creates a deep, unseen wound that stimulates collagen production,

which helps fill in the scars. It takes up to 10 minutes, needs no anesthetic, and yields up to 70 percent improvement in three to five treatments. \$250-\$1,000 per session

erbium laser As effective as the Cool Touch, this laser also injures the skin to produce new collagen, but it leaves a weeping wound. The one time treatment is widely available. \$1,000-\$6,000

dermabrasion The skin surface is basically sanded off, so smoother skin can grow back. Expect a bleeding, raw wound for a week and redness for several months, then up to 30 percent improvement. \$2,000-\$5,000



covering up

Look for a concealer that's medicated (try Clinique or Maybelline). It will help dry up the pimple-and because it's drier than most cover-ups, it's less likely to slide off. "The periphery of the pimple is often peeling, so you need exact placement," says Jaliman, who recommends using a tiny makeup brush-washed with mild soap after each use-for precision.



From top: Clinique Acne Solutions concealer, \$12.50; at dept. stores. Maybelline Blemish Control concealer, \$6.50 at drugstores. Laura Mercier Secret Camouflage brush, \$26 at dept. stores.