

HELP OR HYPE?

Inspecting Gadgets

If you've strolled the beauty aisles lately, you've probably noticed a growing number of devices that glow, vibrate, and heat up to keep your skin smooth, clean, and blemish-free. How effective are they? We asked dermatologists for their verdicts on three of the latest high-tech tools.

ZENO HOT SPOT

S40; drugstores

The claim: Shrinks blemishes with heat.

How it works: Turn it on, and press the heated tip to a pimple for two and a half minutes (the device beeps every 30 seconds and automatically shuts off when time is up). The company recommends doing two to three treatments over a 24-hour period to kill blemish-causing bacteria. This recently released version is less than half the size of the original (it will easily slip into your purse or makeup bag) and heats up instantly—but after 80 treatments (or about 40 pimples) it's kaput, and you'll have to buy a new one.

The verdict: "The heat is enough to destroy the bacteria that live in a pimple, and to evaporate the water that causes much of the inflammation, so the blemish will look smaller," says Ellen Marmur, MD, associate professor at Mount Sinai Medical Center. "But because the heat has to be applied to an individual blemish for several minutes a day, it's not a very practical device if you get more than the occasional breakout."



BLISS 'PORE'FECOTOR GADGET

S40 (for tool and toner); blissworld.com

The claim: Cleans pores with sonic vibrations.

How it works: After applying the toner, you run the tool's metal "blade" over your skin. It emits sonic waves to help break up and remove dirt and oil.

The verdict: "The ultrasound waves create tiny vibrations that basically shake away dead skin cells and dirt," says Jeffrey Dover, MD, president of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery. "The device is a gentle—and kind of fun—way to mechanically exfoliate your skin once a week or so. You could get the same effect with a washcloth or smooth-grained scrub, though." (For about \$160 less.)



ANSR BEAM

S148; ansr.com

The claim: Improves skin tone, smooths fine lines, and clears breakouts with red and blue light-emitting diodes (LEDs).

How it works: Hold the device directly on your skin and run it gently along the surface for five minutes (it shuts off automatically), twice a day. If your goal is to clear a breakout, use the blue-light setting; for fine lines and roughness, use the red-light setting. (Or, for double-duty, do five minutes of each.) Studies have shown that professional LED treatments can both stimulate skin cells to produce new collagen and help heal acne.

The verdict: "Red light can increase collagen to smooth lines, and blue light can decrease the bacteria that causes acne, but the LED machines dermatologists use have hundreds to thousands of tiny lights; this device has only a fraction of that power," says David Goldberg, MD, director of laser research in the dermatology department at Mount Sinai Medical Center. "This might be a good adjunct to other antiaging or acne treatments, but there are no independent studies showing that an at-home LED device will yield results." J.B.



BRIGHT IDEA!

DRY-CLEAN ONLY

Don't h time to get wet? Here are four more reasons to try Tresemme Fresh Start Waterless Foam Shampoo (\$5; drugstores):

- 1 It's easy to apply. (Gently rub two or three pumps onto hair, pat dry with a towel, and go.)
- 2 It's a clear foam, so it doesn't need to be brushed out (a bonus if you want to preserve your curls).
- 3 It contains witch hazel to absorb oil from roots, and aloe vera to keep hair hydrated and shiny.
- 4 It leaves no residue, so your hair looks squeaky clean and refreshed. —A.F.