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Toner Pads Are the Latest K-Beauty Staple to Take Over Our Skincare Routines

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Key Takeaways

- Toner pads, which have roots in Korean skincare, are more popular than ever in the West, simplifying your skincare routine by allowing you to swipe on a precise dose of targeted ingredients.
- You can either swipe a toner pad all over your face, use it as a spot treatment, or apply several like a sheet mask. They also come in different formulas to suit your specific skin type and concerns.

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latest and greatest. Whereas sheet masks and [glass skin serums](#) once reigned supreme (don't get us wrong, they're still popular!), the latest phenomena include [microneedling formulas with spicules](#) and toner pads.

The latter might sound self-explanatory, but toner pads aren't *just* for a quick swipe across your face (though you can use them that way). You can also leave them on "as a mini sheet mask for targeted areas," says dermatologist Teresa Song, MD. It's pretty genius when you think about it: In the same way that you might [multi-mask](#) to address different concerns on your t-zone, cheeks, and dark spots, you can place different toner pads in specific areas for a customized result.



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Whether you regularly use toner or not, this buzzy beauty innovation could be just the thing your skincare routine needs—and there are a wide range of options to fit different skin types. Ahead, **we asked dermatologists and skincare experts for all you need to know about toner pads**, from the different ways to use them to how to choose the best iteration for your skin.

MEET THE EXPERTS

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- Teresa Song, MD, is a board-certified dermatologist at Marmur Medical in New York City.
- Jordan Harper, NP, is a board-certified nurse practitioner and the founder and CEO of skincare brand, Barefaced.

What Are Toner Pads?

"Toner pads are pre-soaked cotton pads that come infused with toner or essence," Song explains. "They're basically a more convenient way to apply toner." Typically, they come as cotton rounds or squares and come packaged conveniently in a little jar—which can be quite deceiving because they often include 50 or more pads. "They're single-use pads that deliver a precise dose of active ingredients, and each swipe gives you serum-level benefits without the extra steps," says nurse practitioner-turned-skincare founder Jordan Harper, NP. Her brand, Barefaced, offers three sets of pads, all of which happen to be bestsellers.

Types of Toner Pads

As mentioned, toner pads come in a range of different formulas, so they're not one-size-fits-all. Nor should you be hesitant to use them if you have dry or sensitive skin: Toners and toner *pads*, for that matter, have come a long way from the stripping formulas of yesteryear. "They can help gently exfoliate, hydrate, or soothe the skin, depending on the formula," Song tells us.

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humectants, lipids, or emollients to add moisture." If neither of these categories sounds like what you're looking for, there's still more: "Other pads are used for exfoliation, fine lines, acne, or clogged pores," she adds.

Song goes on to call out hero ingredients in certain toner pads: "Some toner pads are exfoliating, with acids like AHA or BHA, while others are hydrating with ingredients like hyaluronic acid," she says. She tells us that you'll find calming variants for sensitive skin, "brightening ones with vitamin C, and even pH-balancing options."

But it's not just about the formula that they're soaked in: The pads themselves also can have varying textures. "Some have a slightly rough side for light exfoliation, while others are smooth and soft for daily use," Song tells us. The Summer Fridays Gentle Reset Daily Exfoliating Pads fall into this category, with a smooth side for gentle sloughing and a textured option for physical exfoliation.

Choosing Your Formula

Overwhelmed by the choices and wondering how to choose the best toner pad for you? The decision comes down to your skin type and concerns.

- **If you have aging, acne-prone, uneven, or dull skin**, look for toner pads that are exfoliating with acids like Medicube's Zero Pore Pad. You might even try one with retinoids, like the Innisfree Daily Gentle Retinol Salicylic Toner Pads.
- **For drier, more reactive skin**, it's wise to use formulas that are calming and hydrating, like the Torriden Balanceful Toner Pad. Look for

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approach that is tailor-made for your skin type. Try different types of toner pads on separate areas of your face to cater to varying needs. For redness around the nose, go for something with cica, but on congested areas like the chin, opt for [salicylic acid](#). On the forehead, vitamin C is great for evening out discoloration, and on the cheeks, we love a hydrating hyaluronic or glycerin-infused pad.

Many formulations even pack a combination of exfoliating *and* calming ingredients. We love the hydrating and decongesting properties in [Glow Recipe's Dew It Yourself Toner Pads Masking Kit](#) with 3% PHA and 2% BHA, as well as watermelon extract, cactus water, and glycerin. It works as a do-it-all step for smooth and happy skin. For a more seasoned toner pad user, Harper suggests [Barefaced Toning Pads II](#) for those who want a higher dose of acids.

Ways to Use Toner Pads

As for how to use toner pads, you can either swipe them over your entire face or take the more mask-like approach. "You can use the toner pads as a toner by wiping them across your skin or as a spot treatment by leaving them on the skin for 5 minutes in a specific location or as a sheet mask by placing several pads on the face," Palmer says.

Either way, Song recommends doing so after cleansing, being mindful to avoid the eye area. "Some people use them in the morning to refresh their skin, while others use them at night to [gently exfoliate](#) or prep their skin for the rest of their routine," she says. "You don't need to rinse after, and you can follow up with serums, moisturizer, or sunscreen, depending on the time of day."

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effectively," she says. She shares one caveat, though: "If you're new to actives or have sensitive skin, you can wait until your skin is fully dry before layering to minimize any irritation."

"It's also about frequency," Harper adds. "Some people can use them daily, while others do better with a few times a week, depending on what their skin can handle." As with any new product, it's smart to patch-test on your wrist or forearm to ensure your skin can tolerate it, then ease into use, seeing how your skin reacts. Frequency will depend on the type of toner pad you choose, too. "The key is not to overdo it, especially with exfoliating types," Song says.

Toner pads are great to travel with, as you can easily count out how many you'll need and toss them in a Ziploc bag for easy use on the go. They're also game-changing for [after a workout](#) when you may not be able to wash your face, but want a quick refresh to remove any sweat or dirt and prevent clogged pores.

The Final Takeaway

Toner pads can truly level up your skincare game, especially if you find that your skin doesn't feel clean enough from a cleanser alone. Using a toning pad after cleansing, especially at night, can be pretty revealing in terms of how much dirt, oil, and makeup it picks up. You can also use them in the morning to start your day with an extra-fresh complexion. In this case, be diligent to always use an [SPF](#), especially if your toner pads have exfoliating ingredients.

To help you choose the formula that's best for your skin, scan the packaging for key terms like exfoliating, calming, or hydrating. But you don't *really* have to choose, especially if you have combination skin, because you can

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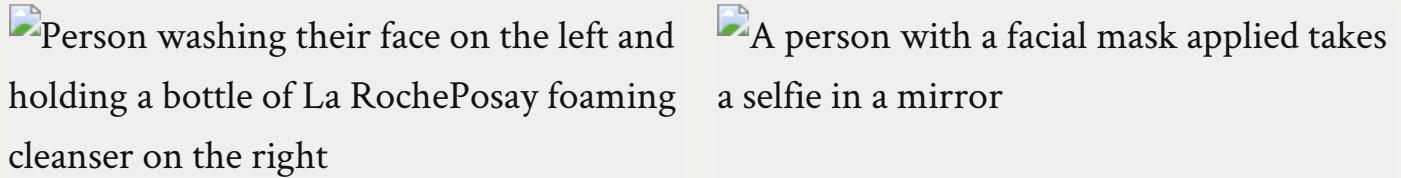
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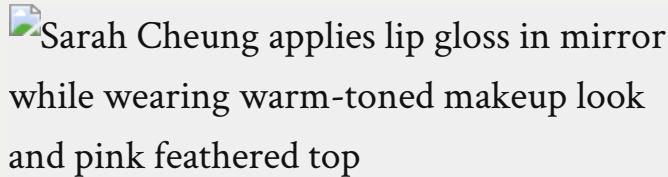


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Two individuals demonstrating skincare products one applying lip mask the other holding a container

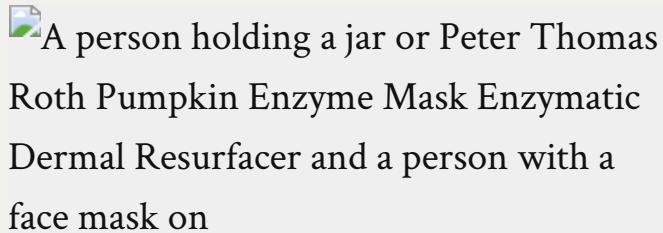


A before and after collage of a tester using the Lux Unfiltered N°12 Bronzing Face Drops

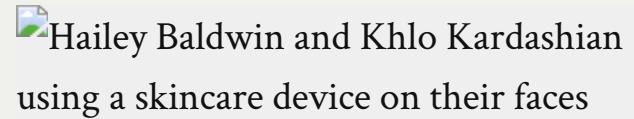
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testers

Kouna Tropical Glow



A person holding a jar of Peter Thomas Roth Pumpkin Enzyme Mask Enzymatic Dermal Resurfacer and a person with a face mask on



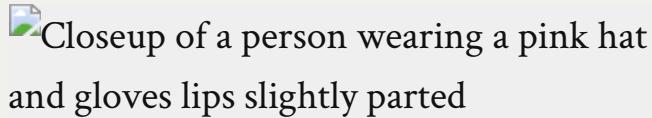
Hailey Baldwin and Khlo Kardashian using a skincare device on their faces

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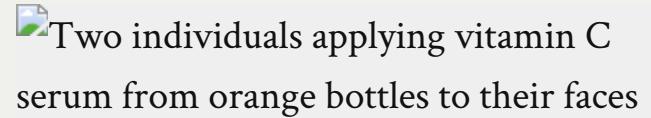
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Closeup of a person wearing a pink hat and gloves, lips slightly parted



Two individuals applying vitamin C serum from orange bottles to their faces

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