

SkinBase[™]
THE FACIAL

The Ultimate Guide to
Pigmentation and
Skin Blemishes



The Ultimate Guide to Pigmentation and Skin Blemishes

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Pigmentation and skin blemishes – an introduction

Whatever your age, there are few of us who haven't experienced some sort of skin blemish, colour change or 'pigmentation'. From sunburn to hormonal changes and infections – skin colour changes can sometimes make us feel self-conscious, worried and searching for answers.

We've talked to the professionals, read and researched medical books and tried to create an easy-to-digest ebook that will help you understand what causes these skin alterations and how you can treat them.

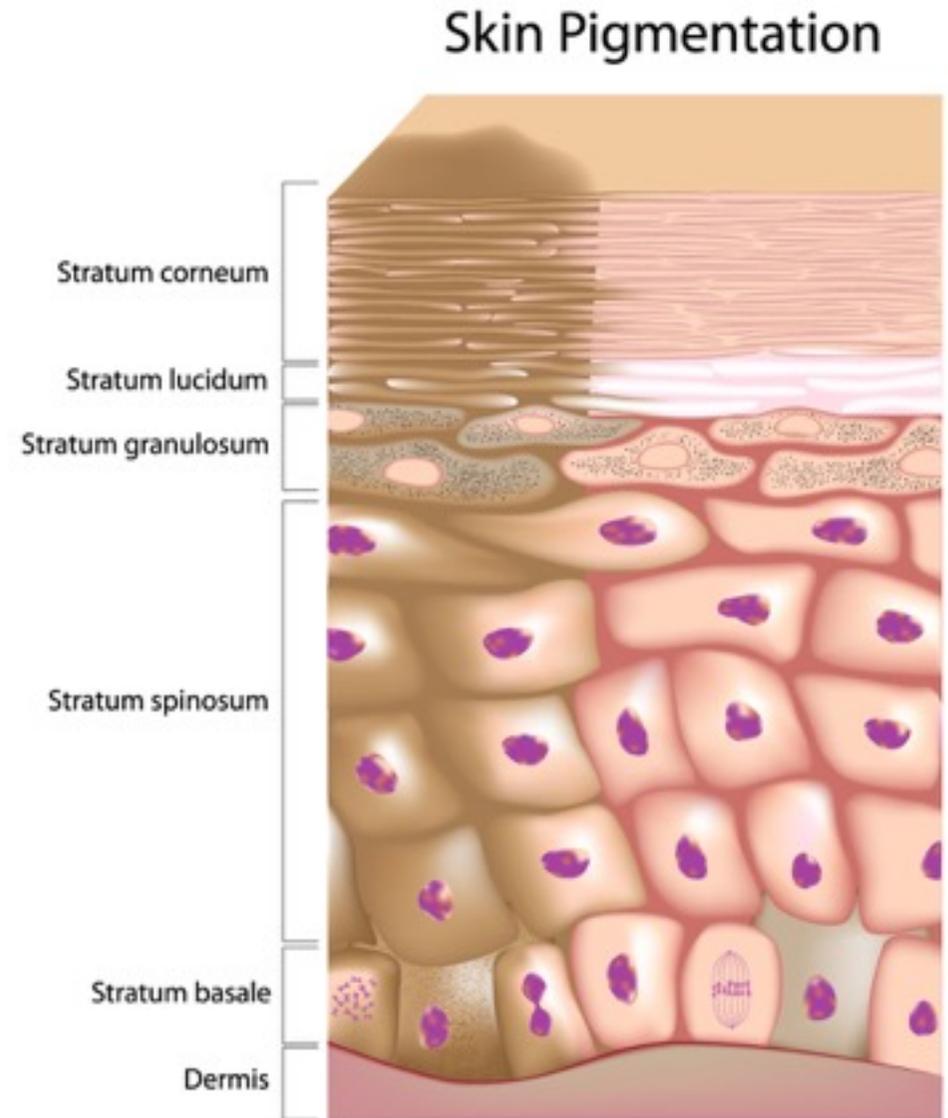
We hope it helps... **The SkinBase team**



What do we mean by pigmentation?

Skin colour is determined by a pigment (melanin) made by specialised cells in the skin (melanocytes). The amount and type of melanin determines a person's skin colour – or skin pigmentation.

Pigmentation is the colouring of a person's skin. When a person is healthy, his or her skin will appear normal in colour. In the case of illness or injury, the person's skin may change colour, becoming darker (hyperpigmentation) or lighter (hypopigmentation).



What causes hyper or hypo pigmentation and skin blemishes?

Irregular areas in which there are changes to skin colour are much more common than you might think. Often, you may have changes in the pigmentation of a certain area of your skin due to a difference in the level of melanin it contains. Melanin is the substance that provides colour to the skin and protects it from the sun. However, there are a wide range of reasons and causes of pigmentation – some of which are listed below...



BURNS

Your skin is much more delicate than you think, and burns – either from the sun or otherwise (hello, hot oven!) – may cause scar tissue of a different colour to form. Some medications can make the skin more susceptible to the sun's rays, and radiation therapy can also cause a kind of burn that changes the colour of your skin.

INFECTIONS

Infections are a common reason for localised changes in skin colour. Cuts and scrapes regularly develop infections that turn the surrounding skin red or white and change the texture too. Erythrasma, Tinea versicolour and ringworm are all infections that can cause patches of skin to turn white, pink, tan, or brown and scaly. The patches can occur all over the body, depending on the exact type of fungus.

AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES AND ALLERGIES

Autoimmune diseases, such as lupus erythematosus and dermatomyositis, can be responsible for changes in skin colour, whilst Eczema is a type of hypersensitivity reaction (allergy) that can cause red, scaly patches that ooze. Related to eczema, pityriasis alba can cause dry, white patches on the skin in children.

A wide variety of rashes, such as dermatitis herpetiformis, contact dermatitis, poison ivy rashes, and others can be caused by an allergic reaction. Scleroderma can create thick, shiny patches of skin. Vitiligo is a condition in which cells that produce melanin are attacked by the immune system, leaving behind patches of skin with no colour at all.

HORMONAL CHANGES

Hormonal changes, especially during pregnancy, can cause skin colour changes. Melasma, or chloasma, can cause dark patches on the face, often called the “mask of pregnancy.”

BIRTHMARKS

Birthmarks are also a cause of skin colour changes.

Café-au-lait spots are light-coloured spots on the skin. A few café-au-lait spots are perfectly normal, but more than six may be an indicator of neurofibromatosis—a genetic disorder that negatively affects the growth and formation of nerve cells.

Moles are brown spots that can appear on the skin at birth. Changes in the size or shape of these spots can signal trouble, and should be checked by your doctor.

Mongolian blue spots are bluish patches that can appear on the backs of babies and young children, usually of Asian descent. They are harmless and often fade over time.

Port-wine stains are a type of birthmark caused by swollen blood vessels. They are usually flat and appear pink or red in colour.

SKIN CANCER

Cancer can change skin colour or texture. Your doctor should examine moles or other rapidly changing skin lesions.

Is it possible to treat, diminish or remove pigmentation and skin blemishes?

Firstly, don't panic! There are a number of ways to treat your pigmentation changes, from great make up, to microdermabrasion or topical bleaching creams. Diagnosis of the reason behind your pigmentation changes is key though, as not all 'dark spots' are created equal. If you're unsure or worried, then make an appointment to see your doctor before attempting any drastic treatments.

Below we look at hyper and hypopigmentation in more detail...



Hypopigmentation – the specifics

Much of this ebook focuses on hyperpigmentation (when a person's skin may change colour to become darker) due to the more varied and proven treatments. However, Hypopigmentation, which is the absence of normal amounts of melanin (the chemical that gives skin its colour), is almost as common.

This type of pigmentation – usually caused by disease, injury, burns or other trauma to the skin is trickier to treat than its skin-darkening cousin. Improperly administered skin-resurfacing treatments, such as Photofacials, laser peels, or chemical peels can also cause skin damage that result in hypopigmentation.



Above: Vitiligo

Hypopigmentation causes

Some chronic skin disorders can also cause hypopigmentation, such as the following:

Albinism - characterised by colourless skin, hair, and eyes that occurs because skin cells produce little or no melanin

Vitiligo - characterised by patchy loss of skin colour that occurs when skin cells that produce melanin die or stop production for no known reason

Seborrheic dermatitis - an inflammatory skin disease characterised by red, scaly, itchy patches of skin in areas prone to oiliness

Tinea versicolor - we mentioned this briefly before, but this is caused by fungal (yeast) infection and characterised by scaly, itchy patches of lighter or pinkish skin

Pityriasis alba - most commonly affects children and is characterised by colourless, scaly skin patches

Post inflammatory hypopigmentation (PIH) - In situations where hypopigmentation is the result of skin inflammation or damage, the condition may be referred to as post-inflammatory hypopigmentation, or PIH.

This can get confusing because PIH is also used to refer to post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, a skin condition where pigmentation is increased, not decreased.

Hypopigmentation treatments

Hypopigmentation treatment options are often limited.

Treating post-inflammatory hypopigmentation may involve the use of topical corticosteroids or tars (topical cream), light or laser treatment, or surgical skin grafting.

Although the numerous lasers and other light-based treatments available today are often perceived as a cosmetic cure-alls, IPL, excimer lasers, and the Fraxel Restore laser are the only light-based procedures that have been suggested by the doctors on RealSelf for hypopigmentation treatment.

For patients who experience extreme hypopigmentation on over half of their body (a rare occurrence of vitiligo), overall depigmentation is an option.

Topical medications: topical agents such as hydroquinone, TriLuma, and other skin lightening agents, may be used to bleach skin not affected by hypopigmentation so that it can blend in better with hypopigmented skin.

For hypopigmentation that is unresponsive to medications, camouflaging with cosmetic tattooing or permanent makeup may be the best option.

At home treatment - there is an 'at home' remedy that may assist with easing the symptoms of hypopigmentation.

Simply take a small piece of fresh ginger and dab it on the area of skin that has hypopigmentation. Do not rinse this off.

Do this twice a day. It will take time to work but within a few months, scars will apparently have faded away completely.

Note* we haven't tried this and would recommend a trip to your doctor or dermatologist for hypopigmentation!

Different treatments for skin blemishes or pigmentation changes

MAKE UP FOR FLAWLESS SKIN

Suddenly noticing the appearance of dark spots or pigmentation can be a real blow to your confidence, but as with many flaws – a great make up technique can be your saviour. Whilst we don't endorse any products specifically here at SkinBase (apart from our own 3D Lifting cream!) these videos have some great techniques for covering dark spots and blemishes.

- [How to cover Hyperpigmentation by Shonagh Scott](#)
- [Full coverage foundation to cover hyperpigmentation by Makeup by Megha](#)

- [Foundation routine – Covering Blemishes by The Make Up Chair](#)



MICRODERMABRASION

The SkinBase microdermabrasion facial was designed as a skin pigmentation treatment and can therefore vastly improve the appearance of facial pigmentation and skin blemishes, especially melasma.

Microdermabrasion will ultimately act as a treatment for your pigmentation, gently removing a layer of skin and removing the dark skin which has formed. The final result and the number of treatments depends on a number of factors including the type of lesion, skin type, the degree of sun tan, size and depth of the vessels and the location to be treated. Your SkinBase therapist will advise you on the number of treatments during your consultation session.

Remember, it is even more important than ever to protect your skin with a high factor sun cream following microdermabrasion due to the crystals gently buffing away the dead skins that may have been helping to protect your skin.

[Have a watch here as Zoe Ball talks us through a SkinBase client getting rid of their pigmentation issues.](#)



TOPICAL BLEACHING CREAMS

A skin bleaching cream can be used to visibly reduce the appearance of: sun damage, age spots, freckles, acne marks, old scars, birthmarks, melasma and uneven skin tones.

A skin bleaching cream works in two different ways:

- Absorbing the UV rays preventing the sun from darkening your skin
- Reducing the production of melanin, the pigment responsible for skin darkening

Most skin bleaching creams contain ingredients that can reduce the amount of melanin production by inhibiting tyrosinase, a key enzyme to melanin synthesis.

A skin bleaching cream is not a product you should buy in a rush. You need to choose wisely and carefully, because some skin bleaching creams may contain ingredients with serious side effects. The first thing to do before buying a skin bleaching cream is to check the ingredients it contains. This

will allow you to discard the creams that contain chemicals that can be harmful or that are banned.

NOTE: ALWAYS seek medical advice before using these creams.



At home remedies for hyperpigmentation

We can't say for sure whether these DIY tips are going to help your hyperpigmentation, but we're pretty sure they're worth a shot...



AVOCADOS

Enriched with fatty acids, vitamin C and oleic acid, avocados can effectively help reduce the appearance of hyperpigmentation. Plus, the various enzymes and high amount of vitamin E in avocados can also reduce pigmentation.

Mash one ripe avocado into a smooth paste. Apply the paste on the affected area. Leave it on for half an hour, and then wash it off with lukewarm water. Follow this remedy twice daily for at least one month to get positive results.

Alternatively, mash half of a ripe avocado into a smooth paste and mix in two teaspoons of honey and one teaspoon of milk. Apply the paste on the affected area. Allow it to dry on its own and then rinse it off with lukewarm water. Do this once daily for a month.

ORANGE PEEL

Next time you eat an orange, keep the peel. It contains citric acid that has bleaching properties and can help get rid of dark patches on skin.

Add one teaspoon each of lemon juice, milk and honey to one tablespoon of dried orange peel powder. Mix all the ingredients well to get a smooth consistency.

Apply the paste on the affected skin.

Leave it on for about 20 minutes, and then massage gently.

Finally wash it off with lukewarm water.

Follow this treatment at least three or four times a week to encourage cell renewal and reduce dark skin patches.

Yes, it might get a little messy!



ALMONDS

Being a rich source of vitamin E, almonds are good for skin and especially hyper-pigmented skin.

Soak five almonds in water overnight.

Next day, remove the almonds from the water and grind them, adding milk to get a fine paste.

Add one teaspoon of honey and few drops of lemon juice to the paste and mix well.

Spread the paste over the affected skin before going to sleep.

Wash it off in the morning with cold water.

Follow this remedy every night for two weeks, and then do it twice weekly.

You can also eat almonds on a regular basis to minimise hyperpigmentation.



OATMEAL

Oatmeal is great for alleviating skin irritation and inflammation due to its soothing and anti-inflammatory properties. It is excellent for rashes caused by poison ivy, eczema, sunburn, chicken pox and allergies.

Grind oatmeal in a blender, food processor or coffee grinder. Mix one cup of finely ground oatmeal in warm bath water. Soak in it for at least 15 or 20 minutes. Do this daily until the rash is gone.

Alternatively, combine one-half cup of oatmeal, one-quarter cup of milk powder and two teaspoons of honey. Put this mixture in a muslin cloth, tie it strongly with a string, ribbon or rubber band, and place it in a bathtub filled with warm water. Soak in the milky bath water for at least 15 minutes. Finally pat dry and moisturise your skin. Repeat daily for a few days.

For rashes on your face, apply a thick paste of equal amounts of oatmeal and plain yogurt mixed with a little honey. Leave it on for about half an hour before washing it off. Do this daily until you see improvement.



Nothing beats prevention!

To avoid the most common pigmentation problems, you need to avoid excessive sun exposure and if required to go in the sun then apply a sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 30.

Hypo pigmented skin sunburns easily, and hyper pigmented skin may get even darker.

Re apply sunscreen every three hours. Plus, to enjoy healthy skin you must follow a proper skin care routine – cleansing, toning, moisturising and exfoliating.



Further reading

Take a minute to read these articles on the Skinbase blog:

- [Foolproof ways to cover pigmentation...](#)
- [Does microdermabrasion really help with pigmentation and skin blemishes?](#)
- [I suffer from pigmentation and skin blemishes, will microdermabrasion help?](#)

Sources

- [Webmd](#)
- [hubpages.com](#)
- [top10homeremedies.com](#)
- [naturalbeautytips.co](#)

What next?

We really hope you've enjoyed this guide. We'll email you with regular beauty tips from our blog.

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