



AGE SPOT



MELASMA



POST INFLAMMATORY
HYPERPIGMENTATION

Complete Guide TO Hyperpigmentation

Pigmentation will NEVER get better
WITHOUT sunscreen

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The desire to get the perfect, even toned, and flawless skin complexion are everyone's dream out there. Even clear skin without blemishes or areas of hyperpigmentation gives an impression of healthy skin. Well, we have all seen the effect hyperpigmentation can cause, and we may be dealing with it ourselves. Hyperpigmentation is no fun. Since we are here and maybe not familiar with this condition, here is everything we need to know about hyperpigmentation, how it happens, and its causes.

What is hyperpigmentation?

Hyperpigmentation is patches of skin that become darker than the surrounding skin. When (melanocytes) pigment-producing cells make too much melanin and cause dark patches on the face. Hyperpigmentation can appear on any part of the body, usually on these areas: chin, cheeks, face, forehead, and bridge of the nose. While this condition does not pose any risks to our health, it can cause stress and frustration for those who suffer from it.

As said earlier, hyperpigmentation occurs due to excess melanin production.

So, what is melanin?

Melanin is a pigment produced by cells called melanocytes in the skin of most animals, including humans. The pigment gives human skin, hair, and eyes color. Melanin comes in two basic forms depending on the genetic makeup of the individual. This pigment can range from yellow to red in color and dark brown. Eumelanin is the most common form of melanin and is dark brown to black, which plays the biggest role in skin pigmentation. The other form is pheomelanin, yellow to red, often associated with red hair and freckles.

Melanin's main function is to protect from UV damage. That is why it is produced when there is an external danger like UV rays, free radicles, Inflammation, or injury.

What causes hyperpigmentation on the skin?

Many factors can cause hyperpigmentation including, Inflammation, sun damage, or other skin injuries. Individuals with darker skin tone are more susceptible to hyperpigmentation, especially with overexposure to the sun.

Hyperpigmentation comes in different forms.

- ✓ Sunspots
- ✓ Post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation
- ✓ Age spots
- ✓ Freckles and Melasma

Hyperpigmentation affects people of all skin tones. However, it tends to affect darker skin types more than people with fair skin tone. Read below to learn about common conditions that can cause hyperpigmentation.

Sun exposure: the number one cause of hyperpigmentation is sun damage. When triggered by harmful UV rays, melanocytes respond by producing more melanin which acts as a natural sunscreen. The overproduction of melanin causes dark patches on the skin.

Hormonal changes: when hormone level goes up and down, side effects change in pigmentation known as melasma. Mostly seen during pregnancy, change in birth control, and hormonal therapies. Extra hormones stimulate the production of melanin. Pregnant women often develop dark patches on the cheeks, forehead, or chin. This type of hyperpigmentation fade after pregnancy or hormonal level return to balance.

Skin Inflammation: we have heard this many times... dark spots develop after Inflammation or an injury to the skin. Anything from a cut to popping your pimple can damage the skin, leading to melanin's overproduction when suffering from acne, eczema, allergic reaction, or any skin damage. After a wound occurs, the skin copes with it by producing an inflammatory reaction. As the wound heals, the skin naturally produces more melanin which darkens the skin. Inflammation often leads to post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation.

What is post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation?

Post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, also known as PIH, occurs after Inflammation, injury, or trauma such as insect bite or scratch to the skin. It appears as a discolored patch that is left behind after the wound has healed. Any form of irritation triggers the melanocytes to produce more pigment, resulting in dark spots where the injury took place.

How does sun exposure cause hyperpigmentation?

Sun exposure is the main cause of hyperpigmentation, as sunlight causes an increase in melanin production. Our skin produces melanin to protect skin from harmful UV rays. The extra melanin makes our skin look darker. However, when the melanin is spread unevenly, this melanin appears as dark patches or spots. Sun exposure can also worsen existing dark spots.

How does pollution cause hyperpigmentation?

We all know how air pollution negatively affects the environment, but mostly how it affects our skin. From Inflammation, irritation, premature aging, and breakouts, protecting our skin from the harmful effects of air pollution are as crucial as protecting it from sun damage.

Pollutants in the air can also worsen Inflammation, especially for those who have melasma. Pollution causes extra hyperpigmentation. As skin comes under oxidative stress, it sometimes makes excess melanin, resulting in darker-colored skin patches. Note that pigmentation from pollution looks like skin damage from UV rays from the sun (uneven patches of darker colored skin) but different from post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, which are dark spots left behind by acne.

Does hyperpigmentation go away on its own?

It depends on the kind of hyperpigmentation we are dealing with, unlike Post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, which can fade away over time. That is not the case for hyperpigmentation even without treatment. Hyperpigmentation does not always fade easily; some will be permanent. It can take 3 to 24 months without any treatment to see improvement. Hyperpigmentation depends on many factors like:

- How deep are the dark spots, superficial hyperpigmentation fades faster than deeper marks?
- Cause of pigmentation: burn marks fade away slowly than marks left after an insect bite or slight scratching.

Although some of the marks will fade away with time, whereas some might require treatment, it might take years or decades.

How can you treat hyperpigmentation?

Now that we understand the meaning and causes of hyperpigmentation on our skin, here is how we can treat hyperpigmentation in different ways.

Retinoids: Retinoids are Vitamin A products that can penetrate deep into the skin and restrict melanin production. They also boost cell turnover to reveal fresh, more even-toned skin.

Vitamin C serum: another ingredient you will want to add to your skincare routine for battling hyperpigmentation is Vitamin C. This antioxidant is effective for hyperpigmentation and a whole range of solutions. Vitamin C serum reduces wrinkle formation by improving collagen production and provides extensive protection against harmful UVA/UVB rays. Vitamin C also defuses free radicals and reduces oxidative stress produced due to harmful pollutants. So, we should never forget to add Vitamin C to our skincare regimen to get soft, younger, and healthy skin.

Exfoliation: Gentle exfoliation can help lift dead skin cells from the surface of the skin. Exfoliation increases cell turnover causing pigmented cells to slough off to the skin surface and heals acne scars.

Sunscreen: Darker skin tone has built-in sunscreen, making it difficult for UV rays to pass through. However, UV radiation can cause skin damage to both fair and darker skin tones. So, wearing sunscreen is a must for everyone. Especially if we want to keep hyperpigmentation at bay, sunscreen can protect our skin from the sun's harmful UV rays. So, it is essential to wear a good quality sunscreen that offers UVA and UVB protection with an SPF of 30 or higher.

For persistent hyperpigmentation/dark spots, it is recommended to consider cosmetic procedures performed by a skincare specialist. These range from chemical peels to laser treatment which targets deeper discoloration. However, before booking a treatment, consult your dermatologist to help identify what treatment best suits your condition and complexion.

Does exfoliating skin help visibly reduce hyperpigmentation?

Exfoliation is key when reducing hyperpigmentation; the removal of dead skin cells further aggravates discoloration and pigmentation. Ensure that you exfoliate regularly. Use extremely mild exfoliants and light peels as opposed to stronger products. Over exfoliation damage, the skin triggers Inflammation and weakens the skin moisture barrier function. The skin barrier is the first

line of defense against UV harmful rays. When our skin becomes damaged, it cannot protect us; as a result, sun exposure worsens hyperpigmentation.

How can you help prevent hyperpigmentation?

It is essential to know what we can do to help reduce dark spots' appearance and prevent them from getting worst. To prevent hyperpigmentation, we should:

- ✓ Wear sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher every day. Why wear sunscreen every day? Besides protecting your skin from the sun's UV rays, sunscreen also helps reduce risks of hyperpigmentation, prevent premature aging, skin cancer, and Inflammation of the skin.
- ✓ Wear protective clothing that helps protect the skin from the sun's harmful rays.
- ✓ Strictly avoid prolonged time in the sun
- ✓ Over-cleansing can also damage the skin. So, it is best to avoid any product that can increase irritation.

What are the best skincare ingredients for hyperpigmentation?

- ✓ **Vitamin C serum** is one of the best ingredients for dark spots, pigmentation, acne marks, and even skin tone. Vitamin C helps fade hyperpigmentation, hydrates the skin, and reduces dark cycles.
- ✓ **Use retinoids:** Retinoids are a must for hyperpigmentation. They increase cell production by pushing dead and hyperpigmented skin cells to the surface and remove them to give room for new and undamaged skin cells. Retinol will give a smoother skin texture, refined pores, improve collagen production, and brighten the complexion.
- ✓ **Sunscreen,** wearing sunscreen every day helps reduce hyperpigmentation and sun damage.
- ✓ **Peptides:** This ingredient work with vitamin C and retinol to visibly improve results over time. The treatment help diminishes skin discoloration and reduces the appearance of dark spots.

All in all, we need to stay in the shade as much as possible, especially for people with dark complexions. Protect yourself from direct sunlight. Always wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen that prevents UV rays from the sun.

If there's one thing you learnt today, what changes would you make? Let us know!