

It's Time to Talk About Melasma

EXACTLY HOW TO GHOST THE WORLD'S MOST ANNOYING FORM OF HYPERPIGMENTATION RIGHT TF NOW.

BY LAUREN BALSAMO



1 WHAT IT IS
Dark, shadowy patches that typically surface on your cheeks, forehead, nose, and chin and above your upper lip, says derm Marina Peredo, MD. More than 90 percent of sufferers are women (you can blame your hormones—more on that later), and it can appear on anyone. But if you have darker skin or a blood relative with melasma, you're more susceptible.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS
UV exposure and fluctuating hormones are two main causes. Both stimulate your melanocytes (the cells that make pigment) to overproduce, “so skipping on SPF, taking hormonal birth control, or being pregnant can put you at risk,” says Dr. Peredo. Inflammation can also cause melasma and is triggered by plenty of culprits, including blue light from a phone, heat (looking at you, hot yoga), and using aggressive skin care.

3 WHEN AND HOW TO TREAT IT
Winter is prime time for getting a jump start on fading your melasma, says derm Arash Akhavan, MD. “UVB rays are less intense, and people are generally spending less time outdoors—two important factors for clearing hyperpigmentation.” A combo of gentle exfoliating peel pads, a brightening serum, and daily SPF (see the regimen below) is the best way to score an even tone in a minimum of four weeks, says Dr. Peredo.

Your Game Plan

Exfoliate With Peel Pads

Gentler than a scrub, these textured pads are soaked in glycolic acid to slough away discoloration and reveal a glowier complexion.



L'Oréal Paris Revitalift Bright Reveal Brightening Peel Pads, \$20 for 30, drugstores

Brighten With a Serum

Look for one with kojic acid, arbutin, and/or vitamin C. These ingredients inhibit pigment production to both fade melasma and help prevent it from forming.



Dr. Dennis Gross Clinical Grade Retinol Serum, \$92, sephora.com

Use 'Screen

Go with one that is SPF 50 or higher and has at least 10 percent zinc oxide (the mineral blocker creates an actual shield on skin, so UV rays can't penetrate, says Dr. Akhavan).



SkinMedica Total Defense + Repair Broad Spectrum SPF 50+ Sunscreen, \$54, amazon.com



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