



Adult, Pediatric & Cosmetic Dermatology
Laser & Skin Surgery

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Melasma

Melasma, also known as the **mask of pregnancy**, is light to dark brown, irregular, patchy pigmentation of the face. Melasma is slow to develop and most commonly affects women with darker skin types. There are different types of melasma: superficial type (epidermal), deeper type (dermal), or a mixed type. We may check your face with a special light to try to ascertain the depth and degree of your melasma. This will help us to choose the right treatment for you.

Causes of Melasma

1. Genetic predisposition
2. Pregnancy
3. Birth control pills, patch, or injection
4. Hormone replacement therapy
5. Progesterone

Things that make Melasma worse

1. Ultraviolet (UV) light
2. Visible light
3. Sunlight
4. Skin rash or inflammation/irritation

Is there treatment for Melasma?

Ninety percent of patients can be helped, but one must keep in mind that it often has taken years to develop melasma and it will be an ongoing process to lighten the brown pigmentation. Treatment of melasma involves a balance of being aggressive enough to lighten the pigmentation without causing irritation which can promote more pigmentation.

Current Treatments

The treatment of melasma involves a combination of depigmenting (bleaching/lightening) agents, glycolic acid treatments, topical Vitamin-A (retinoids), topical Vitamin-C, sunblock SPF 30+, and **patience**.

1. Sun avoidance: Wearing sunblock everyday is extremely important. The sun block needs to be broad-spectrum which means the sunblock must contain one of several ingredients: zinc oxide, titanium dioxide, parsol 1789 or ecamsule. These ingredients block the burning and cancer causing rays (UVB) as well as the UVA rays that lead to skin aging and tanning. The block must contain a high sun protective factor (SPF) of at least 30 or greater to be maximally effective. Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours if it has been washed or sweated off and one continues to be in the sun.

- a. *Protective clothing:* Wide brimmed hats (4 inch brim), clothing that has an SPF of 30 or greater, and powder additive for laundry that makes clothing have a SPF 30 (Sun Guard™)
- b. *Car window tinting:* Placing UVA and UVB tint on car windows (Lumar Window Film).

2. Depigmenting/ Bleaching Agents –

The active ingredients in the primary bleaching agents we use are:

1. Hydroquinone (Obagi Clear or Blender, Eldoquine, Lustra, and Epiquin)
2. Kojic Acid
3. Azelaic Acid (Finacea or Finevin)

These creams may need to be used daily or twice daily for months to get an optimal response.

3. Retinoids– Retin-A, Renova, Differin, Tazorac

These products are all examples of Vitamin-A creams which are helpful to exfoliate the uppermost skin layer, and even out skin pigment to promote a more even skin tone and color. These products can irritate the skin and therefore should be used carefully. Occasionally they will be formulated with a little cortisone cream to diminish redness, and they should be titrated carefully to minimize any adverse skin reaction. Nightly use or at least 2-4 times weekly treatment is encouraged.

4. Glycolic acids in the forms of peels, cleansers, lotions, and cream (**MD Forte** products) These products provide natural, gentle skin exfoliation to aid removal of surface pigment and to speed delivery of medication into the skin.

5. Combination Products- Many products exist that have a combination of active medications in them. We can prescribe special compounds at the pharmacy or compounding pharmacy that have various combinations of glycolic, high potency hydroquinone, retinoid, Vitamin-C and cortisone to help provide a more rapid clearing of the pigmentation. For instance, there is a commercially available product called **Triluma** which contains a hydroquinone, retinoid, and cortisone. Other products are: **Lustra, Alustra, and Glyquin** with combinations of glycolic, hydroquinone, retinoid and sunscreen. We often have a special cream compounded called **Groots** which has a combination of 8% Hydroquinone, a retinoid, Vitamin-C, Kojic acid, and a cortisone in the formulation.

6. Other Products- Many other products aide in pigment bleaching. Vitamin-C products such as **IS Clinical, or Skin Medica. Nia24** which contains niacin has also be proven beneficial for skin bleaching. These products will usually be recommended in combination with some of the products mentioned above to augment your home program.

7. Chemical peels- There are a wide variety of gentle, superficial, in-office chemical peels to exfoliate the upper skin layer and accelerate removal of pigment, improving the evenness of skin color and tone. The peels are done in a series of 2-6 at several week intervals, in office, and have no recovery or down time. The peel solution is selected according to your needs and skin sensitivities and can be mild or strong using such solutions as glycolic acid, salicylic acid, and/or Jessner's solution. Our experienced staff will select a program suited to your needs.

8. Microdermabrasion- Occasionally microdermabrasion, a gentle skin exfoliation, will be recommended for treatment of stubborn cases. This is also done in office with a series of treatments at several week intervals.

9. Laser- There are occasional cases where a Laser may be recommended or at least a test area may be recommended to see how your skin might respond. These tests are done in only the most resistant cases but on occasion Lasers can be of value. Several wavelengths of light may be used including a green Light (Q- switched Nd:YAG), red light (Q-switched Alexandrite), or Infrared lights (Q-switched 1064nm., or the Erbium:YAG Lasers).

Treatment of melasma can be very frustrating and patience and diligent adherence to your prescribed program is usually required.

Reoccurrence of melasma after successful treatment does happen. Therefore, a patient must be vigilant about using treatments exactly as directed.

If there are any questions please contact Monica, Carla, Lynne or Linzee at 795-7729.

Please visit us at www.pimaderm.com for before and after photos and more information on other services we provide.