Melasma

Melasma, also known as the “mask of pregnancy,” is light to dark brown, irregular, patchy pigmentation of the face. It 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 determine 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 Worsen the Condition
1. Ultraviolet (UV) light
2. Visible light
3. Sunlight
4. Skin rash or inflammation/irritation

Is there treatment for Melasma?
90% of patients can be helped. One must keep in mind that it often takes 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 pigment without causing irritation (which can promote further 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, sunscreen SPF 30+, and patience.

1. Sun Avoidance: Wearing sunscreen every day is extremely important. The sunscreen needs to be Broad-Spectrum (UVA/UVB) which means it must contain one of several ingredients: Zinc Oxide, Titanium Dioxide, Parsol 1789 or Ecamsule. These ingredients help to block the burning and cancer causing rays (UVB) as well as the rays that lead to skin aging and tanning (UVA). The sunscreen must contain a high Sun Protective Factor (SPF) of at least 30 or higher to be effective. Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours if it has been washed off due to exposure to water or perspiration.
   a.) Protective Clothing: Wide-brimmed hats (4-inch brim or wider) and wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants are recommended. Protective sunglasses are also advised.
   b.) Car Window Tinting: Placing UVA and UVB tint on car windows (Lumar Window Film) is also helpful.

2. Depigmenting/ Bleaching Agents
The active ingredients in the primary bleaching agents we use are:
- Hydroquinone (Glytone® Skin Bleaching Cream or Gel, Clinicians Complex)
- Mushroom Extract (iS Clinical® Pro-Heal Serum), Sugar Cane Extract (iS Clinical® White Lightening)
- Azelaic Acid (Finacea) This medication may need to be used daily or twice daily for months for optimal results.

Please see reverse side of page.
3. **Retinoids** (Tretinoin/Retin-A, Renova®, Differin®, Tazorac®): These medications 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 should be used carefully. Occasionally, they will be formulated with cortisone cream to diminish redness; they should be used carefully to minimize any adverse skin reaction. Nightly use or at least 2 to 4 times weekly is encouraged.

4. **Glycolic Acids** (in the forms of peels, cleansers, lotions, and creams (Glytone® 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 Acid, high potency Hydroquinone, Retinoids, Vitamin-C, and Cortisone to help provide a more rapid clearing of the pigmentation. We occasionally have a special cream compounded called “Groots” which has a combination of 8% Hydroquinone, a Retinoid, Vitamin-C, Kojic Acid, and Cortisone in the formulation.

6. **Other Products**: Many other products aide in pigment bleaching. SkinMedica®, which contain Retinols, and NIA24®, which contains Niacin, have 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. **Freshening Peels**: There are a wide variety of gentle, superficial, in-office skin freshening 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 to 6 at several week intervals, in office, with minimal to no recovery 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 and Salicylic Acid. 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; 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. Patience and diligent adherence to your prescribed program is required. Reoccurrence of Melasma after successful treatment can happen. Therefore, a patient must be vigilant about using treatments exactly as directed, as well as avoiding sun exposure. Using a sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher is strongly recommended.

To schedule a consultation or for more information, please contact us at [520.795.7729](tel:520.795.7729).

Please visit our website at [www.pimaderm.com](http://www.pimaderm.com).