

Hydroquinone

Hydroquinone is a commonly used "bleaching agent" used to lighten the skin. It is often used by women seeking a lighter complexion and may be recommended for people with melasma, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, freckles or other skin conditions that cause dark patches or spots. Hydroquinone works by causing the skin cells to stop producing pigment (melanin).

Hydroquinone is available as a 2% formulation over-the-counter without a prescription. Your dermatologist may recommend this lower concentration in some circumstances, such as maintenance therapy. Other times your a stronger 4% formulation is required, particularly to treat patches of darker skin. This stronger 4% formulation is available by prescription only.

Brand names of prescription-strength hydroquinone products include:

- Eldopaque
- Eldoquin
- Glyquin
- Lustra AF
- Melpaque
- Melquin
- Solaquin

It may take several days for your skin to begin to lighten. The full effects of the medication may take several months.

Hydroquinone should be used once or twice a day, as directed by your dermatologist. It should be applied after gently cleaning your face. Include about ½ inch of normal skin around the edges of the discolored spots. Do not apply the medicine to the corners of your nose, mouth or eyes.

It is important to avoid exposure to the sun while using hydroquinone and for an indefinite period following treatment. Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher every day to protect your face from the harmful rays of the sun. If you will be outside, wear protective clothing, including a hat. Even a few minutes in the sun can counteract the effects of the medication.

Avoid other skin-care products that may dry or irritate your skin. These may include soaps and cleansers that are rough or cause drying.

Please contact your dermatologist if you are concerned about how your skin is reacting to the medicine.