

Lentigines (Sun Spots)

Lentigines (also referred to as “sun spots”, or “liver spots”) are small, flat round spots on the skin that begin to appear later in life in sun-exposed areas. They are particularly common on the face, neck, arms and backs of the hands, usually sparing the knuckles.

Lentigines are thought to be caused by years of sunlight exposure. The spots may increase in size over time and sometimes join together to create larger spots. They may appear somewhat like freckles, but lentigines are usually darker and have a more consistent color throughout the spot.

Sun Avoidance

Sun avoidance measures should be practiced to prevent new lentigines from appearing and prevent further darkening or growth of the existing spots. This includes the use of broad-spectrum sunscreens and limiting exposure to sunlight.

Treatment

Lentigines are benign, meaning they do not cause any harm. However, some people seek treatment to improve their appearance. There are several possible treatments for lentigines.

There are medications that can be applied to the skin called "bleaching agents" that can make lentigines fade. Although they will not get rid of the lesion completely, the medications can help to hide the lesion by making it less apparent.

The most commonly used bleaching agent is hydroquinone. There are also combination agents that combine several active ingredients, such as Solage, a combination of tretinoin (the same medication found in Retin A) and mequinol.

Your dermatologist may also recommend a dermatological procedure that can be performed quickly in the office. This approach completely eliminates the lesion. Some commonly recommended procedures include the following:

- Punch biopsy
- Shaving of the skin
- Electrodesiccation
- Chemical peels
- Cryotherapy (freezing)
- Lasers.

Your dermatologist will recommend a treatment that is best suited to your specific medical needs and personal choices.

You should contact your dermatologists if your lesion returns after being treated.