

# UNEVEN SKIN ...

## Understanding Skin Tone



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We're all born with a unique, predetermined skin color. But as we age, environmental aggressors like the sun, pollution and lifestyle choices can cause changes in our skin tone.

### WHAT'S CAUSING YOUR SKIN TO BECOME UNEVEN?

Most of us start off with even skin color and tone. As our skin is exposed to environmental pollutants, the sun and UVA and UVB rays, it begins to change and can take on an aged appearance. Discoloration, also known as hyperpigmentation, can arise from a variety of different aggressors. Whether your hyperpigmentation-which can effect all skin types-is brown, pink or red in color, the discolored portion of your skin is basically signaling that it's been damaged. The causes range from acne, the sun or another type of skin injury like a burn or cut.

**Red Spots** - are usually the result of skin inflammation

**Brown Spots** - are tied to sun exposure.

**Freckles** - are brown spots caused by an increase in sun exposure

**Age Spots** - are brown spots that result from sun damage

Light skin tones tend to have a pink undertone and can burn easily. Acne scars, sun spots, bruising and broken

capillaries are more apt to show up on lighter skin because it is thinner and fair.

Light to medium skin tone is the most common skin tone among Caucasians and Asians. Light to medium colored skin has beige or yellow undertones, and hyperpigmentation of all forms can be a common concern

Medium or darker skin tone is the most common skin tone among Latinas and those of Mediterranean descent have medium, or olive skin tones. They are generally more prone to acne scarring, sun damage, and prolonged hyperpigmentation

Very dark skin types are most common in African Americans. Although it has more melanin, and tends to age slower, very dark skin can burn, even though it doesn't show as much. It is prone to sun damage and is more susceptible to developing brown spots.

### WHAT IS MELANIN?

In simplest terms, melanin is the pigmentation found within our skin that gives it a brown or dark color. When melanocytes (which contain melanin and are found within skin cells) are exposed to ultraviolet light, they react and produce greater than normal amounts of melanin, which causes the skin to become dark. Some parts of the body, like the face and chest, naturally contain more melanin and are hit at a different angle by the sun than the rest of the body. That's why you may burn or tan more quickly on your face as opposed to the inner arm.

### COMMON CONCERNS WITH SKIN TONE

### **Cause 1 - Melasma**

Often a symptom of pregnancy that's aggravated by the sun, melasma can result in dark or brown patches on the cheeks, nose, forehead and even the upper lip. It's generally superficial (found on the surface of the skin), but in some cases it can be deep within the dermis. Melasma is usually hormonally related and even though pregnancy is the main cause, anything that changes your hormone levels, like birth control or menopause (even pre-menopause), can bring about this condition.

Melasma tends to occur in larger patches unlike other types of discoloration. It's stimulated by hormones, which can affect a large amount of pigmentation producing cells at once. It can affect all skin types and colors, but it's most common in medium to dark skin tones, which contain more melanocytes. When the melanocytes are exposed to UV light or an influx of hormones, they get excited and produce more melanin, which results in brown discoloration.

### **Cause 2 - Acne Scars (post-inflammatory Hyperpigmentation)**

Even after a blemish heals, it can still leave remnants behind. Red pigmentation from acne, which is the result of inflammation or vascular damage, is quite common. While some people experience acne scars that are deep indentations (these can only be fixed with lasers, collagen stimulating fillers or excision), others experience red or brown discoloration (brown discoloration is due to sun exposure) that can linger for upwards of a year! Skin that has become discolored from acne will eventually even itself out as the skin naturally sheds, but don't expect this process to be quick. The best way to avoid scarring is to avoid picking a blemish; leave extractions to the

professionals or have one show you!!

### **Cause 3 - Age & Liver Spots**

Commonly found in mature skin, age and liver spots are dark pigmented spots on the hands, arms, back, chest, décolleté and face. Technically, age and liver spots arise because cellular function has been changed by the sun. Age spots are in essence a buildup of pigmentation caused by years of sun exposure that continues to grow. They can range in color from light brown to dark brown, can be flat or raised, and are normally found on the surface of the skin. In some cases the damage they cause can go much deeper. When they are medium in depth or thicker, they're known as actinic keratoses and should be treated or removed by a doctor.

### **DANGEROUS DARK SPOTS**

Your dermatologist or a plastic surgeon may treat actinic keratoses (medium to deep dark spots) in various ways. These should be checked by a doctor and if treatment is needed, treated before potentially developing into squamous cell cancer!

### **SOLUTIONS, SOLUTIONS, SOLUTIONS**

If your skin has become uneven in tone, there are quite a few options you can choose from based on intensity and downtime. Hyperpigmentation, even if it's treated, can come back. That is why you **MUST** use a sunscreen and a topical treatment every single day!!

### **Lightening Cream/Hydroquinone**

A lightening cream or regimen, such as Rodan + Fields REVERSE, that contains 2% Hydroquinone, can help even out your skin tone and reverse the damage caused by the sun! Hydroquinone works by decreasing the ability of melanocytes to

produce pigment or melanin. On average, it takes about 4-6 weeks to see results. Every skin is different so the time varies.

### **Microdermabrasion**

A great alternative for those who cannot tolerate topical creams or regimens containing lightening agents, or if you're pregnant. Microdermabrasion is a quick and pain-free treatment that uses tiny, rough, crystals to exfoliate the top layer of the skin, removing the dead skin cells, which EVERYONE has, and enhancing cell turnover. You should always do microdermabrasion in a series of 4-6 treatments. Home microdermabrasion is on the rise and much more affordable than at a salon or spa. Rodan + Fields has 3 microdermabrasion products that are amazing, inexpensive, and selling like crazy right now!

Get that skin looking great for summer!! R+F Micro-Dermabrasion Paste, R+F Micro-Dermabrasion Body Bar, and R+F Micro-Dermabrasion Lips! These are AWESOME!!

Regardless of the treatment that you choose, make sure to wear a sunscreen every single day to protect your skin and prevent future discoloration!!

For more information on or to order the Rodan + Fields products mentioned above, please visit my website:

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