



How Can I Eliminate Age Spots

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By Kay Quinn

(KSDK) - Almost everyone has them. Pigmented areas on the skin called age spots. They rarely lead to cancer, so they aren't a true medical concern. But they can be a cosmetic worry. A viewer wants to know how to eliminate age spots.

There are generally three ways to fade the ones you already have, and keep new spots from turning up.

Doctors can use the special light of a Woods lamp to confirm their diagnosis. Those dark lesions that contain high concentrations of melanin are usually just excess pigment nicknamed an age or sun spot.

"It's basically caused by sun exposure, both chronic over a life time, as well as an acute exposure to sun, sun bathing, that sort of thing," says Dr. Robert Centeno, a Barnes-Jewish Hospital plastic surgeon.

But there's another major cause: hormonal influences tied to aging and child bearing.

"It's also affected by estrogen levels, so in women it happens often around pregnancy they become more prominent, it also happens around the peri-menopausal periods where there are fluctuations in estrogen levels."

And while they appear in a variety of sizes and shapes, eliminating age spots is generally a straightforward process. First, stay out of the sun, use sunscreen daily, especially on the face, arms and hands, and get used to wearing hats. Next?

"You need some sort of maintenance skin care regimen to protect and improve the appearance of your skin. So we usually start patients off on the skin care line that includes an alpha hydroxy acid, hydroquinone or some sort of bleaching agent like kojic acid, a Retin-A, and then sunscreen," says Dr. Centeno.

Finally, a deeper treatment might be necessary.

"If it's a more severe case then you may have to take things up another step and use some sort of resurfacing method such as a light fruit acid peel or a chemical peel, something like that."

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