

Keep dark spots at bay

By MELISSA MAGSAYSAY >>> Dark spots, sun damage and melasma are some of the terms used when referring to those stubborn little marks that appear on your skin because of sun exposure, scarring, pollution and pregnancy. ¶ Particularly for people with darker complexions, those so-called blemishes can be tricky to lighten or entirely remove. ¶ “A lot of what we do involves lasers and heat, which can lead to more pigmentation,” says Dr. Carlos A. Charles, a New York City-based dermatologist whose practice, Derma di Colore, focuses on the treatment of darker skin, about eliminating hyperpigmentation. “People will typically approach darker skin with a lot of hesitation, and with good reason.”

Hyperpigmentation or discoloration can be a manifestation of factors, including trauma from injury, acne scarring, hormones or sun exposure, and is essentially the result of inflammation in the skin.

“The pigment cells rev up after any trauma and leave dark skin, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation,” says Charles. “It’s more common in darker skin, probably because the pigment cells are more robust. When treated too aggressively or not correctly, hyperpigmentation can come back with a vengeance.”

Also, a blemish or dark spot on the skin can return if sun exposure is not limited, and heat or hormones can continue to aggravate inflammation. “Melasma, specifically in and of itself, is a chronic thing,” says Joanna Vargas, a celebrity aesthetician with studios in New York and L.A. “In essence, hyperpigmentation is cell mutation just like lines and wrinkles.”

Undergoing the correct treatment and avoiding excessive sun exposure can help to keep hyperpigmentation away longer. When seeking out treatment for hyperpigmentation in darker skin, Charles says to try to avoid aggressive laser procedures because lasers use heat, which can cause the discoloration to rebound. Also, avoid very strong peels because they too, can worsen hyperpigmentation. “If someone says, ‘Skin resurfacing,’ I’d be careful of that,” he says.

When seeing patients for dark spots, Charles takes a multifaceted approach generally starting with a retinoid to stimulate skin peeling followed by a series of appropriate chemical peels.

This spaced-out method is common among skin professionals, who also address hyperpigmentation in darker skin.

About lightening dark spots on medium to dark complexions, Beverly Hills-based esthetician Sonya Dakar says, “I would definitely say to build up to it — even if it takes six months or a year.” Like Charles, she advises staying away from lasers and also to be wary about chemical peels.

Typically, Dakar does a series of nonaggressive treatments, slowly eliminating hyperpigmentation, so there is no adverse reaction and to ensure color is eliminated long term. Her Fade Away serum targets dark spots, brightening and lightening skin through an active ingredient called Belides, which is derived from the daisy flower and is stimulated to work more through increased sunlight exposure.

“Harsh ingredients like glycolic acid and really strong peels can actually thin the skin and make darker complexions even more sensitive to discoloration,” says Dakar. “This is a big reason why I’m drawn to Belides and incorporated it into my Fade Away serum since it’s gentle and safe.”

One ingredient Dakar won’t use on patients is a common but potentially toxic skin lightening agent called hydroquinone. Some dermatologists treat hyperpigmentation with hydroquinone, usually found in a cream form, as a first step. Dakar, however, isn’t convinced that using the substance is necessary, considering the possible side effects. “There are all kinds of lightening agents, but I don’t turn to hydroquinone because hydroquinone can go through the blood stream to the kidneys, to the liver, and cause liver failure, and you don’t want to go to these extremes.”

The remedy that most, if not, all skin experts agree upon is sunscreen — and sun protection such as hats, UPF (ultraviolet protection factor) clothing and sunglasses, especially in a sun-drenched environment like Southern California. (Shown here are other products you can try to help hyperpigmentation fade and protect your skin in general.)

“Everyone, across the board, should be wearing an SPF of 30,” says Charles. “The zinc and titanium dioxide tend to work better, but often with darker skin, this type of sunblock can be noticeable” because of its opaque, white color. He recommends the brand EltaMD’s sunscreen because it is effective but clear and non-chalky when applied to the skin.

Vargas slathers on SPF 50 every day. However, she reiterates that dark spots or blemishes can quickly return. “Hyperpigmentation and melasma are about the amount of cell mutation and the amount of sensitivity your skin has to being inflamed,” says Vargas. “Some people just have more sensitive skin than others.”



Clinique

Clinique Even Better Clinical Dark Spot Corrector & Optimizer: The clinical-strength serum with CL-302 complex is said to help reverse the appearance of dark spots and blemish marks starting in four weeks after use. \$79.50, www.Clinique.com



ZO Skin Health

ZO Skin Health Ossential Brightening Non-Retinol Skin Brightener: Said to target the stages that cause hyperpigmentation by brightening and evening skin tone. Helps prevent future damage and breaks up existing pigmentation. \$120, ZoSkinHealth.com



DOMINIC GRECO

Sonya Dakar Fade Away’s active ingredient is Belides (derived from the daisy flower), which is said to brighten and lighten skin by inhibiting tyrosinase, the enzyme in the skin that leads to hyperpigmentation. \$195, www.SonyaDakar.com



REN

REN Radiance Perfection Serum contains an oil-soluble vitamin C derivative and rumex occidentalis extract to act as a tyrosinase inhibitor. Both are said to work to reduce melanin production and accumulation of dark pigmentation. \$55, www.RenSkinCare.com



Kfir Ziv

Peter Thomas Roth De-Spot Brightening Corrector contains Illumiscin and ActiWhite, which are used in place of hydroquinone. \$75, www.Sephora.com and www.PeterThomasRoth.com



Ulta

H2O+ Waterbright Dark Spot Corrector contains vitamin C, said to aid in the reduction of melanin production and is known to reduce dark spots and discoloration. Pomelo extract, rich in vitamin C, can potentially help brighten skin. \$38, www.Ulta.com



SkinCeuticals

SkinCeuticals Advanced Pigment Corrector’s ingredients — including salicylic acid, hydroxyphenoxypromionic acid (a non-toxic derivative of hydroquinone), ellagic acid and 4% yeast extract (which targets the dermis) — are said to help in the prevention of new spots. \$90, www.SkinCeuticals.com



LUKE PIGEON

Robin McGraw Revelation Let There Be Bright is formulated with a proprietary triple-action brightening complex. \$66, www.RobinMcGrawRevelation.com



Estée Lauder

Estée Lauder Enlighten Dark Spot Correcting Night Serum, featuring molasses and plum extract, is designed for women of all ethnicities to gently brighten skin tone and reduce the appearance of dark spots. \$94, www.EsteeLauder.com



La Prairie

La Prairie White Caviar Illuminating Serum claims to interrupt the cycle that creates dark spots. \$505, www.LaPrairie.com



Kat Rudu

Kat Rudu Hydra Cell Vitamin C Serum With Hyaluronic Acid’s vitamin C, horsetail, plant based-ferulic acid, dandelion root and wild geranium, paired with a botanical hyaluronic acid, are said to brighten skin and diminish dark patches and sun spots. \$78, www.KatRudu.com



Shodai

SHODAI is a new skin care line for men.

He likes Japan’s ideas

Justin Brown dreamed up what he wants in men’s skin care. Ingredients are quintessentially Japanese.

By KAVITA DASWANI

Descriptions such as “artisanal” and “small batch” are common in the world of women’s skin care — but not often heard in reference to men’s grooming products.

Justin Brown wants to change that with Shodai, a start-up men’s skin care line he founded.

“I had a favorite brand of everything, from watches to milk, but I’d never fallen in love with a skin care product,” Brown said. “I’d never found my brand. I thought I couldn’t be the only guy out there who felt that way.”

Brown, who lives in Tokyo, is hoping to redress that imbalance with his new offering, Shodai (Japanese for “first generation”). This month he launched the brand with a duo of essentials, a moisturizer and a face wash, and he plans to expand the product offerings in 2017. The initial products contain quintessentially Japanese ingredients such as hiba oil, sake, green tea and *onsen* — water from Japanese hot springs.

The brand was created in an incubator program at the marketing company that Brown, who was born in London, has worked with in Tokyo for the last five years. Brown lived in the U.S. for 15 years before that and says that Shodai most likely would not have been born were it not for Japan, the country that’s now his home.

“Shodai is essentially built using a combination of traditional Japanese ingredients and modern skin care technology,” he said. “I learned about some of these ingredients and it clicked — that this could be the kind of skin care product line I would really love.”

Hiba oil, which has a masculine, woody scent, is from the Aomori Hiba tree in Japan, which can take 300 years to mature. The oil, a natural antibacterial, is combined with sake, which contains kojic acid, known to brighten the skin. Green tea is noted for its antioxidant properties, while the inclusion of *onsen* soothes and rejuvenates. The products are free of parabens.

“All four ingredients have been used historically in Japanese skin care,” Brown said. “But hiba oil and sake are expensive, and a lot of manufacturers have moved away from them to find cheaper alternatives. They’re harder to find now, even in Japan, despite their effectiveness and how good they feel.”

Shodai is available online in the U.S. at shodaimen.com; \$20 for face wash and \$24 for face moisturizer.

image@latimes.com



Getty Images

GREEN TEA is an ingredient in Shodai skin care.