

MELASMA

WHAT IS MELASMA?

Melasma is an acquired disorder of hyperpigmentation typically affecting sun-exposed areas of the face. The condition is more common in women with darker skin types. Melasma rarely occurs before puberty, with onset most often in the reproductive years. It usually affects the skin over the cheek bones but can involve the forehead, chin and other areas as well. It is characterized by irregularly bordered, evenly pigmented tan macules on the face. Melasma is not an indication of cancer, an infection or any internal illness.

Melasma is also known as the “mask of pregnancy”. This is because one of the factors which may cause melasma is the hormonal stimulation that occurs during pregnancy. Likewise, other hormonal stimulation such as birth control pills or estrogen therapy can cause melasma to develop.

HOW DO YOU TREAT MELASMA?

In addition to limiting sun exposure, treatments for melasma include skin-lightening agents such as hydroquinone alone or in combination with corticosteroids, tretinoin, retinol, kojic acid, or glycolic acid. A combination cream formulation of hydroquinone 4%, fluocinolone acetonide 0.01%, and tretinoin 0.05% (nightly for 8-24 weeks) has been used with good results.