

# Postinflammatory pigment changes

After the skin is irritated or injured, the color of the skin can change. The skin may become darker or lighter than the natural skin color. This skin color change is called postinflammatory pigment alteration. The color change is temporary but can be worrisome for families.

## WHAT IS POSTINFLAMMATORY PIGMENT CHANGE?

When something hurts your skin or causes a rash, the color of your skin can change. The color may get lighter or darker. These changes are called "postinflammatory pigment changes". We call these changes "postinflammatory hyperpigmentation" when the skin gets darker, and "postinflammatory hypopigmentation" when the skin gets lighter.

## WHAT CAUSES THE SKIN TO CHANGE COLOR?

Skin color can change for a while after any type of injury to the skin. This can start as a bug bite, a cut or scrape, or an acne bump. Color can also change after a rash or dryness on the skin. When the skin is injured, it can heal with inflammation that can look like redness or itching. Once the inflammation goes away, the skin may heal with color changes.

Our skin contains color called melanin. Melanin gives a brown color to the skin, hair, and eyes. When our skin gets hurt, the inflammation can change the amount of melanin in the skin. The skin can heal with more or less melanin in the place where it was hurt, causing the skin to look darker or lighter in that spot.

## WHO GETS POSTINFLAMMATORY PIGMENT CHANGES?

Anyone can get skin color changes, no matter their skin color. It may be more common, or more noticeable, in people with darker skin tones. In lighter skin tones, the color changes may look pink.

## WHAT DO POSTINFLAMMATORY PIGMENT CHANGES LOOK LIKE?

Skin color changes are flat patches of skin that are lighter or darker than the rest of the skin. These are usually where the skin had been hurt or had a rash before.

## HOW ARE POSTINFLAMMATORY PIGMENT CHANGES DIAGNOSED?

Your doctor can diagnose these skin color changes by asking questions and looking at the skin closely. They may use a special light to help to see the color changes better.

### COMMON TRIGGERS FOR SKIN COLOR CHANGES:

- » Eczema/atopic dermatitis
- » Dry skin
- » Psoriasis
- » Other types of rashes
- » Acne
- » Bug bites
- » Scrapes, cuts, or burns

## ▀ HOW ARE POSTINFLAMMATORY PIGMENTARY CHANGES TREATED?

Most skin color changes will go back to the original color on their own. It may take a few months or even years. It is important to try to learn what caused this color change to prevent it in the future. For example, if your child is prone to a certain rash, you can work with your doctor to prevent the rash from coming back.

It is very important for the skin to be protected from the sun. Sunlight on the skin will make the color changes last longer. Sunlight can also tan the healthy skin, making the color changes more visible. Protecting the skin from the sun with hats, clothing, or sunscreen can help the color changes to fade faster.

Other treatments may be recommended to help fade darker spots. These include medicines called hydroquinone, retinoids, or corticosteroids. You can work with your doctor to find the best plan for your child.



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