

What is Vitiligo?

Vitiligo is a skin condition where the skin loses its color. This causes white patches to appear on the skin. Vitiligo can happen on any area of skin. It is common on the face, hands, and feet.

WHAT CAUSES VITILIGO?

Vitiligo is caused by the body's immune system. Normally, the immune system fights off infections, like a cold. In vitiligo, the immune system is attacking the skin color cells. This causes the skin to turn white.

Family history and genes also play a role in causing vitiligo. Stress, trauma to the skin, and sunburns can sometimes make vitiligo worse.

Vitiligo is not contagious. It cannot be spread from person to person.

DOES VITILIGO CAUSE OTHER PROBLEMS?

Vitiligo only affects the skin. Most children with vitiligo have no associated problems.

Some children with vitiligo may have other autoimmune diseases. The most common is thyroid issues. Your doctor may recommend blood work to check for this.

Vitiligo can also cause stress for children and families. It can impact a child's quality of life. Some children may be bullied for looking different. If your child is struggling with this, counseling and support may be helpful.

WHO GETS VITILIGO?

Vitiligo is common. Vitiligo often starts in childhood but can appear at any age. People of all skin tones get vitiligo. Vitiligo can sometimes run in families.

WILL VITILIGO SPREAD?

For most people with vitiligo, white patches appear and spread slowly over time. However, every person is different. Some patients will have very stable vitiligo with few new areas.

IS THERE A CURE?

There is no cure for vitiligo. However, there are many treatments that can work to bring some color back.

HOW CAN VITILIGO BE TREATED?

CHOOSING NO TREATMENT

Some families choose not to treat vitiligo. Vitiligo is not dangerous. If the vitiligo is not in a visible area, or does not bother the child, families may choose not to use any treatments.

TOPICAL THERAPIES

These are creams that are applied to the skin. Options include topical steroids, topical calcineurin inhibitors, and topical JAK-inhibitors.

With any vitiligo therapy, improvement takes time. Creams usually must be used for several months before slow improvement is seen.

LIGHT THERAPY (NARROW BAND UVB and 308-nm LASER)

Light treatments include light boxes and lasers. These treatments can be done either in a dermatology office or with a prescribed home light unit. Light treatments are done 2-3 times a week, for many months at a time.

SYSTEMIC THERAPIES

At this time, no systemic (by mouth or injection) medications are specifically approved for vitiligo. In severe cases, your doctor might recommend off-label medicines to slow the spread of vitiligo.

SURGICAL TREATMENTS

Surgical transfer of skin from normal to white areas is sometimes considered for very stable vitiligo. This treatment is available only in certain areas of the country.



The Society for Pediatric Dermatology
8365 Keystone Crossing, Suite 107
Indianapolis, IN 46240
(317) 202-0224
www.pedsderm.net

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Contributing SPD Members:
Tess Peters, MD
Ki-Young Yoo, MD

Committee Reviewers:
Brandi Kenner-Bell, MD
Andrew Krakowski, MD

Expert Reviewer:
Nanette Silverberg, MD

2023 Revision:
Sarah Cipriano, MD
Lacey Kruse, MD
Patricia Todd, MD