

# 7 Vitiligo

### How can I support a student with vitiligo?

- ✓ Ask them directly how you can help. Listen to their individual needs.
- ✓ Provide the opportunity for them to discuss their condition with the class if they wish to do so. They may prefer the teacher provides information to the class. This can allow their peers to ask questions in a productive setting.
- ✓ Immediately address any teasing and bullying. Provide education to any students saying harmful things and offer effective support for the affected student.
- ✓ Recognize their interests and acknowledge their successes in the classroom and in social settings.
- ✓ Students may need psychologic support if suffering emotional distress due to their condition. Discuss this with their parents and refer to counseling as appropriate.

### OVERVIEW

Vitiligo is a condition which causes patches of lighter-colored skin. Vitiligo is caused when a person's own immune system attacks their pigment-making cells. This leads to pale or white patches of skin. It does not make the person sick in any way. It is not contagious.

Vitiligo can affect any part of the body. It often affects the elbows, hands, knees, and feet, which experience more friction and rubbing. Sometimes, the normal pigment comes back and sometimes the white patches increase in size.

Some children may not need any treatment, but others may be treated with creams or ultraviolet light therapy. There are also makeups which can be applied to conceal the patches.



## What symptoms does someone with vitiligo experience?

### Vitiligo typically causes no physical symptoms.

Vitiligo can have significant psychosocial impact, especially in darker skinned individuals when the patches are more noticeable. Children can develop low self-esteem and depression, and they can fear being questioned by their peers. These problems are more severe if the student is being bullied or teased by other students.

## What special measures might students with vitiligo need?

**Sun protection is very important** in vitiligo as the affected light-colored skin is very susceptible to sunburn. If exposed areas of skin have lost pigment, students need to have access to adequate shade and sensible protective clothing such as broad brimmed hats. They may need help applying sunscreen prior to time spent outside during the school day.

## Is it contagious?

**No, vitiligo is not contagious.** Other students will not get vitiligo with physical contact or play.



### > How To Explain Vitiligo By Age

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<https://achildrenshouse.org/how-to-explain-vitiligo/>