

SARAH JOSSEL



...is the #Beauty**BOSS**

Do you struggle with a melasma moustache in summer?

In the 1980s, Magnum PI's Tom Selleck made the moustache the go-to accessory for men, and it's still all the rage. But for women, any hint of a moustache is a no-no, and there are three ways to remove one: tweeze, thread or wax. (Ouch.) But what about the trickiest to get rid of, which shows up uninvited on our summer holidays? I'm talking about the melasma moustache, aka facial pigmentation, which appears as patchy discolouration on the skin.

I've had an influx of requests for a column on tackling a melasma moustache, or upper-lip shadow, because it commonly occurs after a sunny holiday. "It's due to excess melanin production," says the consultant dermatologist Justine Kluk. "Exposure to UV radiation deepens the pigmentation." Poor us. We set off hoping for a suntan and come back with a sun-tache. And it's not only the moustache — melasma can also strike on the forehead, bridge of the nose, cheeks and chest.

Let's run through a few facts. "Melasma typically appears for the first time between the ages of 20 and 40," Kluk says. "About 90% of sufferers are female, and it is commonly triggered by pregnancy, the contraceptive pill or hormonal medication."

The not-so-good news is that while it's treatable, there is no cure, and what works for one person doesn't work for the next. What's more, it's a long-term skin condition that you can't get rid of (it comes back when you go in the sun), so it is all about prevention and management.

What are your options? Kluk recommends skin-lightening creams. "Prescription creams containing retinoid [a vitamin-A derivative]

or the skin-lightening agent hydroquinone can be used to help fade the dark patches," she says. She also suggests Medik8 White Balance Original Serum (1 £45). It contains kojic acid, which brightens and hydrates. For night-time, try Dr Dennis Gross Ferulic + Retinol Wrinkle Recovery Overnight Serum (2 £85; spacenk.com) or DCL C Scape High Potency Night Booster 30 (3 £108), both of which are designed to give skin an intense overnight boost.

Products can only do so much, though, so it's worth looking into chemical peels such as Dr Nick Lowe's Vi Peel (from £300; drnicklowe.com) — you may need up to four treatments. Another option involves serious commitment: MelaOut, at the Eudolo Clinic, costs a whopping £1,500, but it's more than just one treatment. It includes a hardcore one-off peel, an intense at-home product regimen and a post-peel hydrating facial. They say you will see an 80% improvement after the month-long programme. The downside? Up to a week of peeling.

Some people also swear by skin lasering. However, according to Kluk, "research indicates that results are not consistently good".

And finally, sunscreen. I sound like a broken record telling you to wear it, but if you're prone to pigmentation, then sunscreen is non-negotiable. "Successful treatment of melasma hinges on strict sun avoidance," Kluk says. "Wear an SPF 50 every day and reapply it every few hours." For a make-up-friendly option, try Heliocare 360° Gel Oil-free SPF 50 (4 £28), which is great for sensitive skin.

And, if all else fails, you could always raise money for Movember.



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