



FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SUN DAMAGE:

Reds and Browns, be GONE!

Has fun in the sun left you covered in spots? They're not freckles. It's sun damage! Those spots are solar lentigines and they are called liver spots and age spots for good reason. Nothing ages our skin faster than excessive, unprotected exposure to the sun. Sun damage can come in many forms and you might not even realize that you have it. Nor might you realize that the visible effect of sun damage on your skin can easily be erased with laser treatments.

I have a lot to tell you, but let's start by looking at some of the ways the appearance and health of our skin can be affected by sun exposure.

Brown Spots: The most common form of sun damage will appear as small tan, brown, or black spots which tend to be darker than usual freckles and that do not fade in the winter. They vary in size and usually appear on the face, neck, chest, back, hands, arms, or anywhere that gets a lot of sun exposure. Some sun spots are large and can darken and thicken over time. Some can become skin cancer.

Flushing: Excessive exposure to ultraviolet rays can cause a permanent stretching of small blood vessels in the skin. This can result in a red pigmentation in the skin that may be mottled in appearance.

Wrinkles and Sagging: Ultraviolet rays break down collagen and elastin, the skin's connective tissue, which causes the skin to lose its strength, elasticity and tone. Two people of the same age can appear decades apart in appearance depending on how much sun exposure they have had in their lives.

Poikiloderma: Reddish-brown pigmentation that is splotchy and uneven and may be sprinkled with



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white spots is also sun damage. This type of sun damage is most common on the neck and chest when skin is chronically exposed to the sun.

Melasma: Brown discolourations that do not look like spots but more like stains are usually Melasma, a condition often triggered by hormones. Melasma is not sun damage but will darken dramatically after very little sun exposure.

Actinic Keratosis: These rough, scaly, raised patches that range in colour from pale to brown are also caused by sun exposure. They too can become cancerous.

The best course of treatment to erase the visible effects of sun damage can vary depending on the type and degree of damage and how much natural melanin is in the skin. The space of this article can't accommodate an explanation of all the options, but let's explore two easy solutions.

Phototherapy: IPL or intense Pulsed Light, can target browns and reds on people with fair to medium skin tone. A medical-grade IPL will allow a skilled technician to choose a wavelength and pulse width to target brown or red pigment at the appropriate depth for each. A specific IPL known as a BBL has built-in cooling which can make the use of high energy safe. With cooling, the skin can tolerate multiple passes to target browns and reds simultaneously in the same treatment. A single treatment will make a dramatic improvement and multiple treatments can restore skin to very even tones. Depending on the degree of sun damage, brown pigment will usually require a series of three treatments

repeated two weeks apart. Reds are more stubborn and will often require a series of five treatments repeated four weeks apart. Sun exposure without SPF protection for a few weeks pre or post treatment is strictly contraindicated with phototherapy.

Radio-Frequency: Another form of energy utilized within the medical aesthetics arena, is colour-blind. While lasers and light-based technology are usually only suitable for fair to medium skin tones, radio-frequency can be used on any skin types. Darker skin tones are not as susceptible to sun-damage as lighter skin types but are still prone to dark spots. A series of three to five treatments with this modality will fade hyperpigmentation, smooth textural irregularities, reduce pore size and provide some subtle skin tightening as well.

You will enjoy a more youthful skin tone and will be surprised what an improvement it can make to the overall appearance of your skin. After investing in restoring your skin to a healthier and more youthful appearance, however, it is important to protect your investment with the use of sunscreen. SPF protection is the number one beauty product in the world, because nothing ages our skin faster than unprotected sun exposure.

Skinpossible Laser and Light Solutions offers phototherapy treatments. Give us a call to book your free consultation. Skinpossible is a private medical aesthetics clinic offering non-surgical solutions located five minutes south of the South Calgary Health Campus. Evening and Saturday appointments are available and consultations are always free.

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