



## **VITILIGO**

Vitiligo is a disorder in which the color producing cells in the skin (melanocytes) are destroyed. Clinically, smooth, irregular white patches are seen. They are most commonly located on the hands, feet, and around the mouth, but they can develop anywhere. The areas of color loss tend to develop over several months and then may remain stable.

Vitiligo occurs in about 1 out of every 100 people. Half of people who develop vitiligo have a family member who also has vitiligo. In half of people with vitiligo, it develops before the age of 20.

The patches of vitiligo do not contain pigment (melanin) and are not protected from the sun's ultraviolet radiation. Therefore, they are very prone to sunburn. Vitiligo generally occurs in healthy people. It can rarely be associated with thyroid disorders, diabetes, or anemia, but is not generally considered to be an indicator of internal disease.

## **Treatment**

Since patches of vitiligo are not naturally protected from the sun, it is very important to use high SPF sunscreens (higher than SPF 30 to 45). This can prevent sunburns and reduce the risk to develop skin cancer in the unprotected areas.

The color may return to patches of vitiligo spontaneously, but this is generally a very long process if it occurs at all. It is often treated with topical steroid creams which can be effective. It generally requires longer than 6 to 12 months to cause repigmentation and often can only be used on limited areas of the body because of potential for side effects. Also, a large number of people do not respond to topical treatment at all.

PUVA, a form of ultraviolet light treatment, is also often employed. This is done in a dermatologist=s office 2 to 3 times per week, is only indicated for selected patients, and often takes over 100 treatments to cause repigmentation. As with topical therapy, there are potential side effects, and a large number of people do not respond at all.

Corrective cosmetics are an immediate solution to cover up the white patches until therapy has a chance to work or indefinitely if therapy is not effective or not undertaken. While many cover-ups are available, a commonly used brand is Dermablend, telephone number: 1-800-631-2158, which can be matched in color to your normal skin tones. Sunless tanning lotions may also be used. For more information you may contact the Vitiligo Foundation website at www.nvfi.org.

For more information please visit our website: <a href="www.pennstatehershey.org/web/dermatology/home">www.pennstatehershey.org/web/dermatology/home</a> and click on Health Information Library.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your provider at the location you were treated. Hershey Medical Center, UPC I, Suite 100 (717) 531-6820 or Nyes Road, (717) 657-4045. Penn State Hershey Medical Group, Colonnade Building (814)272-4445.

