

# A spot of bother

Argh, age spots! Those growing brown patches on your face or hands can make you feel really self-conscious, but there are simple ways to make them fade away.

**T**hat dark spot – you didn't notice it setting up camp on your cheek and it certainly wasn't invited. And now you can't help but focus on it – every single time you look in the mirror.

Age spots, or solar lentigo, which often appear as patches left behind after a particularly vehement pimple, can also show up on the hands or around the eyes. Despite the charming name we give them, these little critters relate more to cumulative sun damage rather than cumulative years, explains Dr Adam Sheridan, a Melbourne-based specialist dermatologist and Mohs surgeon. "In fact, your grandmother in chilly Melbourne may have less than your younger aunt in sunny Brisbane," he says. "Nonetheless, the skin is less able to deal with oxidative insults, such as sun damage and pollution, as it ages."

Age spots occur when cells overproduce melanin (the substance that gives your skin colour), resulting in an area of darkening. This can be caused by external triggers, such as UV light, or internal factors, such as stress. There's a layer in the skin called the dermal-epidermal junction, which is where melanosomes – or

parcels of melanin – are formed in cells known as melanocytes. When damaged, those melanosomes move to the cells above them, slowly coming to the surface over the next 30 days or so – and that's when you see the dark areas. And if the inflammation is still active? The pigment keeps on coming.

Broad-spectrum sunscreen and a hat, especially in strong sunshine, are your best preventative bets. If you're trying to tackle spots that already exist, there's a raft of options that can help minimise them. Start with a spot-fading cream from a reputable skincare brand (see opposite for our top picks). "Vitamin C and other antioxidants, such as retinoids, are helpful in fading and preventing pigment," explains Dr Sheridan. Or speak to your doctor or dermatologist, who can prescribe even stronger concentrations.

Dermatologists also have access to more effective treatments, including lasers, which absorb the melanin (dark pigment) in age spots, and light therapy, such as Omnilux, which uses infrared light to reduce pigmentation – minus the downtime. Either way, with the right TLC you can banish those pesky brown spots for good.

## Our picks

### NATIO VITAMIN C SKIN BRIGHTENING SERUM

This silky, smoothing serum promotes clearer, brighter skin with ingredients like shea butter, vitamin C and plant oils. **\$21.95, natio.com.au**



### ELUCENT EVEN TONE NIGHT MOISTURISER

Reduce pigmentation and increase hydration while you sleep with this rich night cream. **\$49.99, Chemist Warehouse**



### PRO X BY OLAY BRIGHTENING SPOT FADING ESSENCE

This new treatment targets dark spots with niacinamide, known for its pigmentation-reducing, skin smoothing powers. **\$69.99, Priceline**



### SKIN VIRTUE FUTURE ADVANCED BRIGHTENING

This potent brightening cream targets age spots and pigmentation, without allergens, irritants, parabens or mineral oils. **\$100, skinvirtue.com**



### IS CLINICAL WHITE LIGHTENING SERUM

This intensive serum effectively reduces uneven skin tone, while exfoliating without peeling, for a smooth, bright complexion. **From \$127, isclinical.com.au**

