

# medium**m**blonde



## *DARK SPOTS GET ALL THE PRESS. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE WHITE ONES?*

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SKIN, MAKEUP

I spent too much time in the sun as a teen. By college, I already had brown sunspots splattered all over my chest. I hated them so much, I avoided v-necks and strapless tops until my mid-twenties, when I had the spots zapped off with a laser. Diligent skincare, sunscreen, peels and some touchup lasering has kept new dark spots mostly at bay for me. However, since I turned 40, a new kind of spot has started to appear: *white* ones.

On me, these white, pea-sized dots first cropped up on my shins. Then I got a patch on my neck. They become more obvious if I get any (inadvertent) color in the summer or on vacation—or I’m flushed. Heather, a reader in Atlanta, recently wrote to me that she too is seeing spots, but never anything written on how to treat them. There’s a reason for that.

There is no cure, no magic eraser. Unlike dark spots, which can be zapped off by pigment-targeting lasers, white spots (official name: idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis) are completely lacking in melanocytes, and there is, alas, no laser (or any treatment at all) that can stimulate pigment production. Boo. You can, however, make them less obvious. More on that in a second. But first...

Where do white spots come from? “We’re not exactly sure,” admits Neal Schultz, MD, a Manhattan dermatologist, “but they typically appear in sun-damaged skin so UV exposure is likely a factor.” Some doctors also think they may be part of the aging process, a reduction in melanocytes not unlike greying hair. They’re more common in the fairer-skinned—probably a good thing since they’d be more obvious in darker complexions—and pop up on more women than men, which is definitely not fair. Finally, most of the time, they first appear after 40. So I’m a textbook case.

How can you make them less obvious? Gary Goldenberg, MD, Assistant Clinical Professor of Dermatology at The Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City, said his patients with white spots have found some improvement with laser resurfacing, which helps to correct overall skin tone, making the disparity between pigmented and unpigmented spots less obvious. Lasers can also help to remove excessive red or brown tones so the white spots blends better with your natural skin color.

Similarly, applying anything you use on your face to keep your aging skin healthy—retinoids, glycolic acid, sunscreen, simple moisturizer—may help downplay white spots because healthy, plump, exfoliated skin just looks more even in tone. I know the spots on my shins are more obvious before I apply body lotion.

Finally, Dr. Schultz said a little self-tanner or even temporary bronzing body lotions can help camouflage the spots because they give white areas the pigment they don't come by naturally any longer. The easiest way to do this, in my opinion, is to just make Jergens Gradual Self-Tanner part of your regular bodycare routine and apply it two to three times a week to subtly boost your skin tone and even things out. If you're impatient like me, try the Wet Skin version, which can be applied to still-damp skin in the shower. Anti-self tanner? Keep a tube of liquid body bronzer such as Westmore Beauty Body Coverage Perfector in Natural Radiance or Benefit Hoola Zero Tan Lines Allover Body Bronzer—and apply wherever your white spots are most obvious. And, finally, if you really don't want to deepen your skin tone at all, you can lightly spackle white spots with a long-lasting, water-resistant foundation, such as Dermablend Quick Fix Body, in the same shade as your natural skincolor.