

Hair Loss, Warts, and Scars: Scientists ID the Facial Features Villains Have in Common



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As a whole, movie villains have a certain look: They're usually not as good-looking as the movie's hero, and have certain physical features that make them seem more evil than other characters. When you see a villain onscreen, you know it.



Scientists say villains have certain facial features in common, such as dark under-eye circles and wrinkles. (Photo: Giphy)

But scientists decided to explore *why* we're able to spot villains so clearly, and dove into the dermatologic features they have in common. The results were published online in the April 2017 journal of JAMA Dermatology. For the study, researchers took a look at the all-time top 10 film heroes and villains from the American Film Institute's 100 Greatest Heroes and Villains List. Villains included Hannibal Lecter (*The Silence of the Lambs*), Mr. Potter (*It's a Wonderful Life*), Darth Vader (*The Empire Strikes Back*), the Queen (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*), Regan MacNeil (*The Exorcist*), and the Wicked Witch of the West (*The Wizard of Oz*). They then analyzed dermatologic characteristics of each and looked for patterns.

Here's what they found: Six of the top 10 villains have distinct dermatologic features. They included:

- Alopecia, or hair loss (30 percent: Hannibal Lecter, Darth Vader, and Mr. Potter)
- Dark under-eye circles (30 percent: Darth Vader, Regan MacNeil, and the Queen)
- Wrinkles (20 percent: Darth Vader and the Queen)
- Facial warts (20 percent: the Wicked Witch of the West and the Queen)
- Facial scars (20 percent: Darth Vader and Regan MacNeil)

Six of the villains studied had some kind of dermatologic condition on their faces, but only two film heroes did. Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and Rick Blaine in *Casablanca* had facial scars, but the study's authors noted that "heroic" facial scars are usually more subtle and smaller than those of their villainous counterparts.

But those "villainous" dermatological conditions are also fairly common in real-life people. "It is unfortunate that skin conditions are villainized, but it demonstrates the significant psychosocial impact they have on patients and the importance of good treatments," Joshua Zeichner, M.D., a New York City-based board-certified dermatologist, tells Yahoo Beauty.

Some of the conditions — such as wrinkles and dark under-eye circles — are common but more often associated with advanced age, poor health, and nutrition, Gary Goldenberg, M.D., medical director of the Dermatology Faculty Practice at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, tells Yahoo Beauty.

The good news: If you have one of these skin conditions and wish you didn't, you should know that they are often treatable. Hair loss can be treated with platelet-rich plasma (PRP) injections, oral medication, Rogaine, and hair transplant procedures, Goldenberg says. You can reduce wrinkles with options such as Botox, fillers, laser resurfacing, and microneedling — a minimally invasive skin rejuvenation procedure that uses fine needles to puncture the skin to create a controlled skin injury that stimulates collagen production — according to Goldenberg.

There are several causes of dark under-eye circles, Zeichner notes, including having thin, pale skin, and a loss of facial volume. "Collagen-stimulating eye creams to strengthen the skin, combined with antioxidant eye creams to brighten, are key components to improving the skin," he says, adding that vitamin K can also lighten the area under a person's eyes. And, if you visit a dermatologist, he or she can use injectable hyaluronic acid fillers to boost facial volume and mask under-eye bags, Zeichner says.

Scars are pretty common, but Zeichner says their appearance can be minimized by over-the-counter silicone gels and sheets that protect, hydrate, soften, and stimulate healthy collagen production in the scar. A dermatologist can also use lasers to reduce redness and improve the texture of the scars, he says.

As for warts, Zeichner says they can be easily treated with a variety of topical agents, such as salicylic acid, which sloughs off the growth. A dermatologist can also freeze a wart off for you — just know that you may need patience. "Unfortunately, warts are tough to treat, and often need repeated treatments months after month," Zeichner says.

If you have a "villainous" dermatologic condition and it bothers you, don't be a hero — talk to your dermatologist about your options. It may be easier to fix than you think.