

## **Vitiligo**

Vitiligo is a skin condition caused due to loss of pigmentation or also due to absence or less amount of hormone called melanin's secretion in the body. Vitiligo is also commonly known as a skin condition with white patches. Sometimes it is also considered to be an autoimmune disease that occurs because our immune system mistakenly tries to attack or degenerate the melanocytes that produce melanin.

### **Causes of vitiligo:**

Although we do not know the main cause of vitiligo yet, There are many factors that can trigger this and lead to progression of vitiligo.

#### **Auto-immune factors:**

This is believed to be the leading cause of vitiligo where it is believed that our immune system mistakenly attacks and tries to destroy melanocytes that are present in our body.

#### **Hereditary and Genetic Predisposition:**

It is believed that if there's family history of vitiligo there are higher chances for a person to develop vitiligo.

#### **Environmental and Neurochemical factors:**

We have also seen that there are factors that can influence vitiligo and sometimes due to certain neurochemicals that are produced by nerve endings can lead to destruction of melanocytes. Stressful events or traumas even exposure to sun, without any skin barrier like sunscreen or moisturiser might act as a trigger for people who are genetically disposed to it.

### **Commonly seen symptoms of Vitiligo:**

#### **Appearance of vitiligo:**

The first and most important symptom of vitiligo is the appearance of depigmented patches on our skin, that is vividly distinguished on brown and black skin. The patches might differ in size and

color but it mostly spreads over time or might also merge. Vitiligo is not a contagious disease, it can only spread through a person's body who is already diagnosed with vitiligo.

**Affected areas of body:**

Vitiligo can affect any part of the body, For example face, hands, legs or even genital/ private area, But it can also impact on deeper level of our skin like mucous membrane that is responsible for our lips,

**Progression:**

Vitiligo can easily spread not only in a person's skin but it can also affect individuals' hairs like eyebrows or eyelashes as well. Although Vitiligo is considered as a skin disease/ condition it doesn't cause any physical discomfort to the individual.

Vitiligo's progression varies from person to person. For Example it cannot be said how much time it takes particularly to spread over a body part, it may take one month or two for an individual and for others it may take several more months than that.

**Vitiligo Treatment and Medicine:**

The treatment for vitiligo mainly focuses on re-establishing the color of the skin that gets depigmented due to loss of melanin.

The treatments that are frequently suggested by dermatologists for helping in prevention of vitiligo can include phototherapy also known as light therapy, excimer laser, depigmentation and many more.

**Phototherapy(Light therapy)**

Phototherapy is commonly known as light therapy because it uses exposure to UV lights that can be done use UVB narrowband lights. In many cases phototherapy is used frequently as it helps in restoring the color of skin for widespread parts although it may require multiple sessions.

**Excimer laser:**

Excimer laser is frequently used in curing the limited vitiligo that is not spreading throughout the body. It emits UVB lights that aim at affected areas to restore the repigmentation.

**Depigmentation:**

Depigmentation is widely used for the areas that are widely impacted and other treatments are not too effective. It involves the process of lightening the pigmented area to match the depigmented.

Another treatments involves micropigmentation and psoralen plus UVA (PUVA) therapy:

**Micropigmentation:** Micropigmentation involves concentrating the pigments to the areas that are depigmented , so that it can match the surrounding skin.

**Psoralen plus UVA Therapy(abbreviated as PUVA):**

Psoralen is a light sensitized medicine that is used in combination with UVA light exposure. It is mainly effective for widely spread vitiligo but it does have it's own side effects.

**Medicines for Vitiligo:**

The medicines that we can frequently use for vitiligo are topical corticosteroids, topical calcineurin and topical prostaglandin analogues

**Topical Corticosteroids:** These are anti -inflammatory creams or ointments that can help in restoring the pigments in the affected area. Although these are mostly effective on small and newly formed patches that might have chances of developing further.

**Topical Calcineurin:** Topical Calcineurin is an inhibitor that helps in slowing or preventing the process of vitiligo. It reduces the activity of cells that attack with melanocytes. Some inhibitors that are mostly prescribed are tacrolimus and pimecrolimus that may help in reducing the inflammation and help in pigmentation.

**Topical Prostaglandin Analogues:**

Although it is not widely used, some researchers have suggested that few particular prostaglandin analogues might be able to stimulate melanocyte proliferation and repigmentation.

## **Can vitiligo be cured with the help of homeopathy?**

It is a question that leads many people to a shocking stage. Although homeopathy is believed to find a natural cure for all diseases, it may give results to a certain extent to few people but not more. It is still not scientifically proven that homeopathy can cure vitiligo as even the exact cause is yet to be found. It is recommended that you should seek a health professional such as a dermatologist who have proper knowledge of the condition and is also informed about all the latest treatments and studies that are going on in the field.

Even though many people have found positive results, homeopathy is still not recommended by experts as the multifactor and complex nature of vitiligo makes it difficult to find a cure for it. Before thinking of any other alternatives than dermatologist it is best to seek help from experts only as they are trained in diagnosing and managing the skin conditions.

## **Products that helps in vitiligo**

Individuals detected with vitiligo can use various products as self care and manage the skin condition that can help them in their appearance. Even though we can not cure vitiligo completely, using products as per their skin type and condition helps in boosting their confidence and deal with problems that they'd not like to share.

**Moisturizers:** Moisturizers helps in making the skin stay hydrated as the dry skin can worsen the appearance of vitiligo, and might also impact the skin more negatively. The individual should choose an allergy friendly and chemical free moisturizer that lets the skin stay hydrated for a while.

**Sunscreen:** Sunscreen is important for a person as it protects the skin from harmful UV rays emitting from the sun that affects the skin and can lead to many other skin conditions. It is essential for a person diagnosed with vitiligo as the area that is depigmented is more susceptible to sunburn than other parts. The individual should use a broad spectrum sunscreen with a high SPF that is more than or equal to 30 SPF, Although sunscreens that have SPF 15 block approximately 93% of sun rays, SPF 30 and more can block around 96% to 98%.

**Nonreactive Soaps and Cleansers:** To avoid the skin irritation and further inconveniences, the person should use soaps and cleansers that are non reactive and better if they are prioritized for sensitive skin.

**Tanning Products:** There are various people who use tanning products to darken the depigmented area to match their natural skin color that helps in blending and building their confidence.. It is mostly suggested to use products that are safe for dry and sensitive skin.

**Camouflage Makeup:** Camouflage makeup helps in covering the depigmented area and these are products are mainly focused to make skin tone and natural colors to provide long lasting coverage.

**Vitamin and Minerals need of body:** When using products not only outer physical body is required to be stay safe and protected but the person can use supplements like vitamin B12 and folic acid , as it deficiencies of vitamins may also be associated with vitiligo

Along with using these products, the individuals with vitiligo should prioritize their overall physical as well as mental health and maintain self care practice, such as practicing meditation for inner and outer peace of body, protection against sun exposure and mental support if needed.

## **Vitiligo's impact on person's physical and mental health:**

As we know vitiligo is a skin disease that is concerned with loss of pigmentation in certain areas of the body. Even though it does not lead to any particularly physical or emotional condition it may affect on a wide scale where the changes are not easily observed but it may lead to uncertain results. We will be looking at how a skin condition can impact a person's overall physical and mental health.

**Physical health** is concerned with our biological health and appearance of the body.

When a person is diagnosed with vitiligo, they might feel several concerns related to their health, for example

**Sun Sensitivity:** The depigmented areas of the body might be more dry or sensitive than other parts of the body that makes them more susceptible to skin irritation and sun burn as well. The individuals might have to go through another extent to take care of their skin so they can protect it from harmful UV rays.

**Skin Infections:** The loss of pigmentation might result in losing the ability of defending that area from other infections and bacteria, that makes them more prone to skin infections and they might have to take extra care of themselves.

**Beauty Concerns:** The changes associated with vitiligo might concern them more if the affected area is easily visible.

**Auto-immune diseases:** Many times vitiligo is associated with other autoimmune diseases for example, thyroid disorders and diabetes. Regular health checkup and monitoring is more essential to them.

**Mental Health** is concerned with the overall well being of a person's mental and as well as emotional state.

Vitiligo is not concerned with any of the mental issues but it may lead to serious complications if a person is suffering because of it and is not able to express himself.

**Psychological distress :** Vitiligo can impact a person's perception and it may lead to embarrassment, self consciousness, and even lower self esteem if the patches are present on visible areas. Managing these emotions can be challenging.

**Anxiety:** The appearance of vitiligo on visible body parts can impact on person's social interaction and self confidence, that also leads a person to feel certain pressure and also leads to distress.

**Social Stigma and Impact on relationships:** As we read earlier, the appearance of vitiligo can also lead to societal pressure of beauty standards. Sometimes this skin condition also leads to prejudices and misconceptions.

It also impacts negatively on interpersonal relationships as the person may suffer through fear of judgement and rejection. Family members, relatives, friends and other closed ones play a crucial role in supporting mental health.

**Isolation and Withdrawal:** Due to prejudice and societal pressure the individual can show symptoms of isolation and withdrawal, they will try to avoid the social interactions that will also affect their quality of life.

**Coping Strategies:** To deal with the symptoms of anxiety and other mental pressures, the person needs to develop coping strategies such as joining counseling sessions, seeking professional support or finding ways to express themselves easily.

It is essential for the person to encourage their physical and mental health, As Vitiligo impacts on mental and physical health, a person should encourage healthy and well adjusted practices for their overall well-being. One should not encourage mal-adjusted behaviors and prejudices that can lead to severe challenges.

Also encouraging positive body and self image as well as promoting awareness and acceptance will be a contributive and great help for society.

## Prevention of Vitiligo:

Prevention of vitiligo is a challenging step as we still do not know the exact cause of the condition, despite that there are some measures that can be taken for minimizing the risk or in delaying the process. It's important to know that these practices might not be effective for everyone as it's not guaranteed that it can prevent vitiligo.

Here are some suggestion:

**Sun protection:** It is essential to protect your skin from too much sun exposure. If prevention is not taken it can lead to sunburn or can also exacerbate vitiligo. One should always use Sunscreen with high SPF such as SPF 30 or SPF 50++

**Healthy lifestyle:** To prevent vitiligo one should practice a healthy lifestyle such as a balanced diet, regular exercise and sufficient sleep. A strong immune system is essential for overall health.

**Early detection and treatment:** If you are noticing a sudden change in skin color or any depigmented patches on your skin, consult with your dermatologist priorly. Early detection and treatment can help in managing the condition more effectively.

**Regular skin checkups:** Regular skin check ups with dermatologists and proper skin care can help more effectively.

**Genetic Counseling:** If its seen that vitiligo is already present in your family for more than two generations one should consider genetic Counseling even though it's not hereditary but there might be some genetic disposition.

It's important to know that preventing vitiligo is not totally possible as we don't know the exact cause but while using these preventions one can minimize or these can also help in delaying the process even if it develops.

If you are going through concerns of vitiligo you should see a expert dermatologist who can help you with your doubts and guide thoroughly with personalised guidance based on your individual health and family history.

## **Dermat Suggestions for Vitiligo**

If you are diagnosed with vitiligo, consulting with a dermatologist is a crucial step and it helps with personalized care and treatment plans. Dermatologists are skin specialists who can help with various skin conditions including vitiligo and they can also help you with specifically your case. Here are some suggestions that can help you while working with a dermatologist for your treatment.

**Early Consultation:** If you are noticing any depigmented patches on your skin you should seek professional advice with your dermatologist as soon as possible. Early detection and prevention can be beneficial in managing vitiligo.

**Find a Specialist:** As soon as the detection is done one should seek dermatologist and have the latest knowledge about lasers and other treatment options.

**Medical History and Examination:** While seeking professional health you should provide your medical history, including all the family history of vitiligo or any other auto immune diseases. A detailed examination will help in determining the reach and progress of the condition.

**Individualized Treatment Plan:** After thorough examination, you can discuss available treatment options based on the affected area and severity of vitiligo. Also one can discuss individualized treatment plans that suit your needs, lifestyle and the condition as well. Treatment might also involve a combination of therapies that includes lasers and medicines as well.

**Psychological Support:** If you are going through any psychological or emotional stress due to your skin condition you can talk about it to your dermatologist so they can help you to cope with it and can also refer to mental health professionals who have knowledge about skin conditions and have dealt with people suffering through conditions.

**Cosmetic Options:** If you are attracted to cosmetic options, such as camouflage makeup or tattooing like micro, you can get detailed information from someone professional and they can help you with choosing safe and effective products and procedures.

**Education and Resources:** You should ask your dermatologists for educational resources about vitiligo, including all the articles, support groups and mental health articles related to diseases as well. Being well educated about the condition will help in making informed decisions.

**Long-Term Management:** After discussing the treatment plans with your dermatologist you should also discuss the long term strategies that will help in maintaining skin health and minimize the influence of vitiligo on quality of your life.

Always remember that effective management of vitiligo involves various medical treatments, lifestyle adjustments and also psychological support from closed ones. Open communication with dermatologist is an essential part in treating vitiligo, and addressing any other concerns that you might be facing due to it.

Remember, effective management of vitiligo often involves a combination of medical treatment, lifestyle adjustments, and psychological support. Open communication with your dermatologist is key to developing a successful treatment plan and addressing any concerns you may have.