



Skin camouflage

People cope with and respond to vitiligo in a variety of ways. Many people use camouflage to cover their vitiligo, so that they can get on with their lives without feeling self-conscious in public. However, skin camouflage does not suit everyone.

This eBooklet aims to give you the facts about camouflage, to help you decide whether it may be an option for you. The eBooklet *Managing vitiligo – Other products and processes* deals with alternatives to camouflage.

WHAT IS **skin camouflage?**

Skin camouflage is the use of special creams which cover up the vitiligo patches. Creams are made in a wide range of skin colours so that they can be matched to an individual's natural skin colour.

Skin camouflage cannot alter the texture of the skin, nor can it cure vitiligo. What it does is to make the white patches less noticeable. Even when the camouflage is not an accurate skin colour match, it can stop people staring or making comments and asking questions.

Who can use it?

Skin camouflage can be used by men, women and children, irrespective of age, religion, nationality and skin classification group. It is not 'make-up'. Camouflage products are suitable for anybody who wants to find an appropriate product for their skin and learn how to apply it.

WHEN SHOULD **skin camouflage** BE USED?

That is entirely up to the individual. You may want to wear it all the time, especially when you start to develop vitiligo and are adjusting to having the condition. For some people, using camouflage is a long-term lifeline. Alternatively, you may want to use camouflage only on special occasions.

What is special

ABOUT SKIN CAMOUFLAGE PRODUCTS?

Some make-up products can be very effective in masking the white patches, but they do not have all the necessary properties of skin camouflage:

- When correctly applied, skin camouflage is **waterproof**, which means you can go swimming, take a shower or have a bath without it coming off.
- The products have **sun screening properties**, although no skin camouflage should be considered a full sunblock. They certainly should not be relied upon as sun protection for the whole day. Non-greasy sun protection can be applied underneath the camouflage and reapplied over it throughout the day.
- For those who like to wear **make-up**, it can be applied over the camouflage.
- Depending upon the brand chosen, an application of skin camouflage should stay in place for 8 to 16 hours before the need to 'touch up' or reapply.

CAN SKIN CAMOUFLAGE

damage

THE SKIN?

For hygienic reasons, it is recommended that camouflage is removed daily and the skin is cleansed, but camouflage products can be immediately reapplied. There is no current evidence that skin camouflage creams encourage spots, damage the skin or encourage vitiligo.

HOW DO I GET
SKIN CAMOUFLAGE
products?



Skin camouflage involves applying a cream, which is fixed by a setting powder. At present (February 2013), there are five brands available, at doctor's discretion, on NHS prescription. They have similar ingredients and are:

- **Covermark,**
- **Dermacolor,**
- **Keromask,**
- **Veil,**
- **Dermablend.**

These brands can also be ordered without a prescription from your chemist and most can be mail-ordered off the internet from the UK supplier. The creams and powders cost little more than the average cosmetic, but a small amount covers a large area of skin - this makes skin camouflage quite cost effective.

There are other brands of skin camouflage products available on the Internet and over the counter in some shops. These may give an identical outcome to those listed above, but you really need to see the colours on your skin to achieve an acceptable skin match. This can be difficult in your local department store or chemist. Remember too that products available in the UK have to be licensed for sale and must comply with EU legislation and regulations; not all products available elsewhere carry such a safety standard.

Getting advice about skin camouflage

It is advisable to seek the advice of someone trained in skin camouflage in order to:

- **Choose the best product** for your skin and lifestyle.
- **Obtain an acceptable skin colour match for your skin.** Ideally one cream and one powder should be all you need. If your skin changes colour with the seasons, then it is better to see the consultant during the height of summer for a skin match. The consultant will then give you an additional colour to the skin tone for you to mix and create the autumn, winter and spring skin colour. An extra colour will also be needed if your vitiligo spans skin that is two toned, for example to the inner and outer side of your arm. You may need an additional colour if you have multiple freckles (photos 1 & 2), or beard shadow (photos 3 & 4).
- **Learn how to apply the camouflage.**
Most people find the quickest and easiest way to apply their camouflage is with their fingertips (photo 5) but you can use a brush or cosmetic sponge if you prefer.

You then need to use a powder puff to apply the setting powder (photo 6), as this will ensure that you press and roll the powder into the cream.

A cosmetic brush is a useful tool to dust off excess powder (photo 7).

Using a fixing spray (photo 8) will make the camouflage application more secure. This can be an important part of the application routine when the camouflage is used on very personal areas of the body.

When you have learned the technique of applying camouflage, it should be quick and easy to do! (photo 9). It should add just a few minutes to your usual hygiene routine.

- **Learn how to maintain and remove the camouflage quickly.** You will need to know how to maintain the camouflaged area during wear, what might accidentally remove the camouflage and how to remove the products quickly and effectively.

Camouflage is difficult to remove from head hair, so care needs to be taken when working close to the hairline. It is easily brushed off from eyebrows and fine hairs to your limbs and body.

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1 before & 2 after applying multiple freckles



3 before & 4 after applying beard shadow



5 application using finger tips



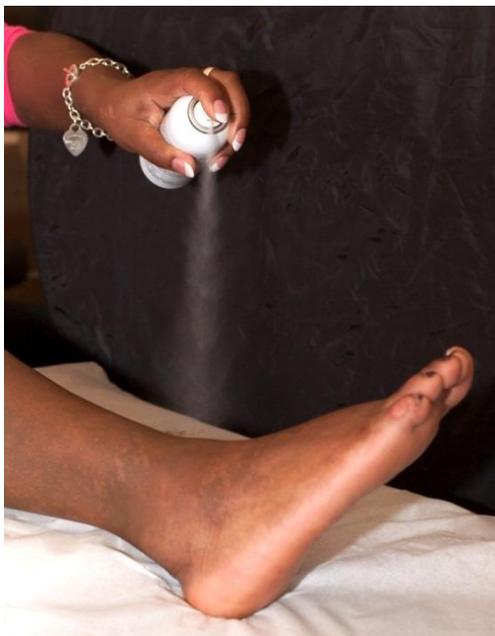
6 powdering



7 brushing off excess



8 applying fixing spray



9 finished result



HOW CAN I
FIND SKIN CAMOUFLAGE
consultants?

There are two organisations which offer information and advice:

The British Association of Skin Camouflage (BASC)

This organisation is an independent, non-profit making charity that provides skin camouflage training for a range of professionals. BASC's trained professionals provide a skin matching service within the NHS and private practice. You can refer yourself, or your medical adviser can refer you, to a BASC practitioner, but you may have to pay a fee for a consultation in the private sector; NHS consultations are free. In addition to prescribable skin camouflage products, the BASC uses a wider range of products and processes to achieve effective skin camouflage.

Contact details: Tel: 01254 703 107

E-mail: info@skin-camouflage.net

Website: www.skin-camouflage.net

Changing Faces

This organisation offers a skin camouflage consultation service, run by trained volunteers (until recently it was run by the Red Cross). The volunteers select the best colour match for each person's natural skin tone and then teach people how to apply the products. You may need to be referred by your medical adviser to this service. It is free, but donations are requested. This service only uses prescribable skin camouflage products.

Contact details: Tel: 0300 012 0276

E-mail: skincam@changingfaces.org.uk

Website: www.changingfaces.org.uk



WHAT ARE THE
difficulties
INVOLVED IN USING SKIN
CAMOUFLAGE?

- **It can rub off.** No product should be considered fully rub-proof. It can rub off onto your clothes, for example from the back of your thigh and the inside of your trousers when you are moving about on your seat. However, the products are detergent soluble – soap powder will remove all traces from clothing and bedding.
- **It can wash off.** Toilet soap can remove the camouflage if you rub hard. Light washing should not dislodge the camouflaged area. Any oil-based product will quickly lift the camouflage off your skin, something you should bear in mind if you enjoy aromatherapy massage.
- **It has to be applied properly to be effective.** The camouflage may be obvious to others if it is applied too thickly. A fine layer is all you need.

The setting powder will create a matt finish – this may make the camouflaged area noticeable when your surrounding skin has a natural glow. The use of a fixing spray will give a semi to full glow finish (photo 8). Remember though, that other people are unlikely to look at you as closely as you look at yourself. Camouflage will give the general impression of a consistent skin tone.

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