

# SKIN SENSE

## Sun Spots? Dark Patches? Wise Up On Skin Pigmentation Conditions

(NAPSA)—The American Academy of Dermatology estimates that millions of people will experience a skin pigmentation disorder at some point in their life. For many, this will result in emotional distress, embarrassment and feelings of premature aging.

It's important to remember to protect yourself from the sun all year-round. Too much UV radiation may cause blotchy, sun-damaged skin. A common skin condition resulting from overexposure to the sun is solar lentigo, also known as sun, age or liver spots. They appear as flat, medium-to-dark-brown freckles typically on the hands, forearms, chest and face and are usually about one to five centimeters in diameter.

By the time they've reached the age of 60, nearly 90 percent of light-skinned people develop this skin pigmentation condition but only two in 10 seek the advice of a dermatologist. In fact, most leave their spots untreated because they either see them as a natural part of aging or do not realize that safe and effective treatments exist.

Beyond exacerbating a pre-existing condition, the sun is also a key trigger factor in the onset of a skin pigmentation disorder called melasma. Melasma is characterized by dark spots or blotches on the face, forehead and neck and results from excess melanin being deposited in the dermal or epidermal layers of the skin.

Hormones also play a role. Melasma, or the "mask of pregnancy," occurs in 50 to 70 percent of pregnant women and five to 34 per-



### **Pregnant women frequently experience skin blotches due to hormones.**

cent of women taking birth control. Melasma will likely recur with subsequent pregnancies. Long-term management of these conditions involves sun avoidance, regular use of sunscreens (dermatologists recommended daily use of SPF 30 with frequent re-application) and the use of non-hormonal methods of birth control. Intense or chronic exposure to the sun will worsen or precipitate recurrence.

In addition to a rigorous sun protection program, doctors may recommend a "depigmenting" topical product that may lessen the appearance of lesions on the face, forearms and hands. To find out more about such treatments, please speak with a dermatologist.

To learn more about safe and effective treatments, visit the Web site at [www.pigmentationawareness.com](http://www.pigmentationawareness.com).