

# TREATING AGE SPOTS

By Dermatology Associates

**A**ge spots—also called solar lentigines or liver spots—are flat brown or tan spots on sun exposed areas of the body. They can vary in size and most commonly appear on the face, hands, arms and shoulders—areas that have had the most sun exposure over the years. This happens due to an increase of pigmented cells located in the superficial layers of the skin. The pigment in the upper layer of skin that gives your skin its color is called melanin. Ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun or tanning beds speeds up the production of melanin. Age spots start to appear on areas of the skin that have had years of prolonged sun exposure when this melanin is produced in high concentrations. Age spots are most common in adults as they get older, but younger people can get them as well, especially if they have spent a lot of time in the sun.

While most people might not like the way age spots look, a true age spot is harmless and does not need treatment. You should, however, see your dermatologist for routine skin checks to evaluate your skin if these lesions develop an irregular border or changes in thickness, size, or pigmentation to rule out skin cancer. Prevention is the best medicine to help avoid age spots. The easiest way to maintain your skin's appearance would be to avoid excessive sunlight and tanning beds and to apply sunscreen daily.

## Treatment Options

Patients often seek treatment to reduce or remove the appearance of age spots, and various cosmetic options are available for treating them.

**Laser and IPL treatments**, which we offer in our Johnson City and Kingsport locations, help minimize and improve the appearance of solar lentigines. Intense pulsed light (IPL) or flashlamp therapy is non-ablative (does not cause damage to the epidermis) and is a non-invasive treatment that uses high intensity pulses of visible light to destroy melanin-producing cells to help improve the appearance of age spots. These treatments generally require several sessions. After treatment, age spots fade gradually over a few weeks or months timeframe.



**Topical treatments** can be applied to the age spot directly with the use of prescription creams. The options are using solely a bleaching cream (Hydroquinone) or a bleaching cream with retinoids (Tretinoin), which may gradually fade the spots over several months. Hydroquinone has long been considered the “gold standard” for its ability to lighten and reduce the appearance of brown spots. Tretinoin (Retin-A), is a vitamin A derivative topical cream. Tretinoin works by exfoliating the top layer of skin and increases the cell turnover within the skin. Tretinoin, when used in conjunction with Hydroquinone, can help fade discoloration and sun damage. Use of a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a SPF of at least 30 is advised when using these topical medications.

Dermatology Associates is committed to restoring your skin to a more youthful glow and to help you continue your results with our professional skin care services and products. Our goal is to provide

you with effective, customized treatments for natural and safe results. Call us at any of our 3 locations to schedule an appointment.

Source:  
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/age-spots/basics/definition/con-20030473>

<http://www.aocd.org/?page=Lentigines>

**DERMATOLOGY  
ASSOCIATES**  
[www.tricityderm.com](http://www.tricityderm.com)

**Kingsport (423) 246-4961**  
2300 West Stone Drive

**Bristol (423) 764-7131**  
3183 West State Street

**Johnson City (423) 928-9014**  
1021 West Oakland Avenue