

## **Hyperpigmentation: Liver Spots**

### **Chinese Patent and Folk Remedies**

By Mary Elizabeth Wakefield, LAc, Dipl. Ac., MS, MM

In our last article, we discussed the relationship between colon health and the appearance of the skin. As we approach the spring equinox and the beginning of summer, it seems appropriate to examine some Chinese patent and folk remedies for "liver spots." When treating patients by means of facial acupuncture, one of the perennial questions that pops up in the course of treatment has to do with the discoloration of the skin commonly known as liver spots, and whether one can make them "disappear."

The patient should always be informed that such an improvement in the appearance of the skin is entirely dependent upon dietary regimen, exposure to the sun, and constitutional profile.

Part of this process of education includes instilling in patients a sense of responsibility for their actions. A third component of the equation is to provide remedies that they may use for self-treatment.

The treatment of hyperpigmentation requires constant vigilance, and an awareness of basic health habits. I have included in this article some simple suggestions your patients may implement while you are treating them constitutionally.

### **Hyperpigmentation**

Hyperpigmentation is characterized by flat, round, noncarcinogenic brown or reddish brown spots that develop on the hands, arms, face, shoulders, feet and legs. This usually occurs with increasing age.

**Causes:** This can be the result of melanin accumulation in the epidermal or dermal layer of the skin, due to age, excessive sun, pregnancy, birth control pills, injury, chicken pox, shingles, acne scars and hereditary factors.

*Chloasma gravidarum* (pregnancy mask) is a brownish pigmentation on the face and neck, due to hormonal shifts and sun sensitivity. *Age spots* or *liver spots* (lentigines) are usually caused by accumulated sun damage, and customarily appear after age 30. *Freckles* are hereditary and usually disappear when there is no excessive exposure to the sun.

### **Prevention**

**Contraindications:** avoid the sun, detoxify the liver, and wear sunscreen to protect the skin.

**Green papaya enzyme mask:** This is used to even out the skin tone and fade brown spots. Apply before retiring for the night; use mild glycolic acid after cleaning, then moisturize.

**Age spot cranberry crush:** Apply juice of crushed fresh cranberries to age spots, and let them dry overnight. Wash off in the morning and note the lighter skin tone.

**Lemon skin lightener:** 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (AHA and bleaching action); 1 small potato - peeled (enzyme action); 1/2 small cucumber (cooling agent); 1 tablespoon organic yogurt (lactic acid and bleaching action)

In a blender, combine all ingredients until a spreadable paste is achieved. If the mixture is lumpy, strain it and keep the remainder in the refrigerator for 24 hours.

Pull the hair up; lie back on a towel; and apply the puree to the face, neck and chest. Cover with two hot, damp towels. Leave on for 15-20 minutes and then rinse. Follow this treatment with a moisturizer. If the moisture tingles, this is a positive sign. If it stings, wash it off and apply aloe vera gel, lavender hydrosol spray or chamomile tea. Do not use on inflamed, sensitive or sunburned skin.

### **Anti-Aging Skin Foods**

This recipe, from Italy, lightens age spots, diminishes fine lines and wrinkles, and refines dry skin. The magic is accounted for by the lactic acid in the yogurt and tartaric acid in the wine.

1/2 cup Chianti (Italian red wine)

1 cup organic, plain yogurt

Whip wine and yogurt together (you may store this mixture for up to two days). Lie in the bathtub and apply the mixture to face, chest, roughened heels, etc. Rest for 5-15 minutes and rinse with "chianti water." Pat dry, and follow with a small amount of olive oil.

**Liver spots:** Chinese patch-removing pills; blood-building herbs that moisturize and rebuild the liver. Three bottles are considered a treatment.

**Contraindications:** the herbs are very moistening. If a person has a coated tongue, he or she might develop temporary indigestion or a head cold. In that case, give several myrrh capsules along with the patch-removing pills. If the patient develops blemishes, administer:

- 1 dose patch-removing pills
- 3 dandelion capsules
- 1 myrrh capsule

All of the above should be taken twice daily.

### **Chinese Pearl Creams**

**Beanne extra pearl cream:** for pimples, blotches and liver spots. Yellow box for blemishes - made from ginseng, honey, pearl, bird's nest, apple, and vitamins. Green box for bleaching the skin - fades freckles and suntan, and is also good under the eyes for dark circles and fading the skin - made from pearl, lanolin, aloe vera, spices, etc.

Take pearl powder internally late August and late October, one vial twice a day for one week, and one vial per day for three weeks. This is good for yin-deficient, peri-menopausal and menopausal women and andropausal men! (Note: make sure the pearl powder is very pure prior to taking it internally.)

**Liver spots, brown spots or patches due to Liver *qi* stagnation:** use 1 egg white and 1 teaspoon *xing ren* (apricot seed). Use as a mask on hands, neck, face. Leave on overnight and rinse with white rice wine in the morning.

### **Conclusion**

It is possible to reduce the appearance of liver spots by using natural folk and herbal remedies. Keep in mind that such beneficial changes, in keeping with the treatment protocols of constitutional facial acupuncture

renewal, are the result of an organic process, and will require time to manifest. Educate your patients about their responsibility in this matter, and have a great summer!

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