

Dark Spots on Face: Five Triggers, Three Habits

The five triggers that keep making new spots, the three daily habits that stop them, and the warning signs that mean a spot needs a doctor.

✓ **Verified against published guidance** from Cleveland Clinic, Harvard Health, Mayo Clinic & the AAD · sources below

Mayo Clinic says to have a doctor look at any spot that is black, growing, has an irregular border, an unusual mix of colors, or is bleeding. These changes can be signs of melanoma.

✓ Do This

Sort Your Trigger

- Sun: flat tan spots, hands too
- Hormones: cheeks, lip, forehead
- Marks where breakouts healed

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic and Harvard Health list the causes.

Sunscreen Every Day

- Broad spectrum, SPF 30 or higher
- 15 to 30 minutes before going out
- Reapply every two hours

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic sets all three numbers.

Cover Up

- Broad-brimmed hat, not a cap
- UPF 40 to 50 clothing
- No sun 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic and the AAD.

Be Gentle With The Skin

- Fragrance-free, for sensitive skin
- Stop anything that stings
- Never pick at pimples

COACH'S TIP The AAD and Cleveland Clinic.

Treat The Breakout First

- Acne, eczema or psoriasis
- Marks fade once flares stop
- Ask about prescription help

COACH'S TIP The AAD.

Say This At The Visit

- Are these age spots?
- Test thyroid and vitamins?
- Is this medicine a cause?

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic names the blood tests.

✗ Do Not

Do Not Fade Without Preventing

- Lifelong condition
- New spots without sun care
- Prevention is the treatment

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic and the AAD.

Do Not Skip Tinted Sunscreen

- Visible light causes spots too
- Look for iron oxide
- Non-comedogenic if oily

COACH'S TIP The AAD.

Do Not Stop A Medicine Alone

- Birth control pills
- Light-sensitizing drugs
- Ask the prescriber to switch

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic, Harvard Health, the AAD.

Do Not Use Tanning Beds

- They cause age spots
- Same as the sun
- No safe tan

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic.

Do Not Assume Every Spot Is Harmless

- Black, growing, irregular
- Mixed colors or bleeding
- Get it checked

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic and Harvard Health.

Do Not Expect A Quick Fade

- 6 to 12 months once cause stops
- Deep color takes years
- Photograph monthly

COACH'S TIP The AAD and Cleveland Clinic.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THIS SHEET

Three figures worth knowing

2 hours between sunscreen reapplications, sooner if swimming or sweating, per Mayo Clinic and the AAD

10 to 2 the hours to stay out of the sun, per Mayo Clinic and the AAD

6 to 12 months for a spot a few shades darker to fade once its cause stops, per the AAD