

# Aging Spots

## SEBORRHEIC KERATOSIS



**BY PAT LAM, CIDESCO INTERNATIONAL EXAMINER**

FRECKLES... we think of a splattering of light brown spots sprinkled over the nose and cheeks of a child – so cute! AGE SPOTS... not so cute any more as the image of larger spots on the face, hands and arms of an aging wrinkled skin comes to mind. We either love or hate them!

Liver spots, sun spots, lentigines, solar lentigines, macules, senile actinic keratosis, solar keratosis, seborrheic keratosis. What do all these words mean exactly? They are all pigmented spots that appear in aging. As beauty therapists, we should acquire a clearer knowledge of the varying terminology so we can explain what they mean to our clients especially if they are concerned about them. And if they want to get rid of them, what treatments are available? The following article will help to clarify these terms.

As the aging population continue to explode globally, there is a marked increase to retain our youthful appearance and remove any signs of aging from our faces and bodies, Aging spots are one of the most visible signs and they can be esthetically displeasing to most people.

All these terms refer to flat, brown spots found especially on the face, The term “liver spots” has been incorrectly given to these aging

spots because they were originally thought to be caused from liver dysfunction. Found mainly on the shoulders, arms and back of the hands previously exposed to previous chronic sun exposure, they can also be hereditary.

Aging spots usually appear in middle age and while most of them are flat, some can be raised and darker pigmented and called seborrheic keratosis. They increase in aging and with irregular shapes, distinct borders varying in size from 0.2 to 2 cm. The word “senile” refers to “getting old”, “actinic” refers to sun while “keratosis” is in reference to the proliferation of keratinized cells of the epidermis leading to a raised lesion on the skin’s surface which is of a darker pigment than the typical aging spots. A macule is a small flat pigment that does not change in color or texture.

While most of these aging spots are most likely to be benign, “actinic keratosis” occur mainly among fair-skinned individuals, Fitzpatrick Skin Type 1. They are distinct from other aging spots since they can be “pre-cancerous” and can be distinguished from other keratosis by its reddish, scaly appearance and mostly found on the cheeks, bridge of nose, tip of ears, scalp, back of hands and forearms. Actinic keratosis on the tip of the ears are more likely to occur among men rather than women whose hair tend to protect them from the sun’s damaging rays. Clients must be informed to keep a close eye on these lesions if they change in color to the reddish color and rough skin texture. They should be referred to a physician.

Seborrheic keratosis are raised pigmented lesions a.k.a. barnacles of aging. They are benign tumors arising from keratinocytes, appearing to be a dirty yellowish brown warty lesions on the face and trunk of the body. They increase in number as one gets older. They can be of larger sizes and are very unsightly when they are found on the eyelids and cheeks. Removing them can take years off one’s physical appearance.



## What are the treatment options for aging spots?

Treatments include chemical peels such as retinoic acids, hydroquinone (2% over the counter, 4% by prescription). They may cause side effects such as skin sensitivity. Products marketed as skin lighteners may contain a variety of ingredients such as Vitamin C, licorice, kojic acid and niacinamide. Home remedies include rubbing lemon juice, aloe vera and castor oil. Again these may cause skin allergies and sensitivity.

Professional treatments by cryotherapy (N2O) and electro-dessication are quite quick, effective and inexpensive in comparison to laser therapy which tends to affect the surrounding tissues as well. These treatments are given by medical practitioners or trained beauty therapists. After care and home care advice are very important to follow after the treatment.

## Can aging spots be prevented?

It is possible to prevent most of these aging spots if you take precautions in your early years by:

- using broad spectrum sunscreen products especially on the typical areas where they appear
- wear hats and sunglasses in the sun
- avoid indoor tanning booths
- use moisturizing face and body lotions everyday

While you may enjoy the sun’s exposure in your youth, just remember that those ugly aging spots can arise from this behavior and perhaps you may take better precautions then.