

## **MELASMA**

Melasma is a skin condition, which causes an increase in pigmentation on the facial skin. It usually affects the skin over the cheekbones but can involve the forehead, chin and other areas as well. Melasma is a condition, which causes a pigment change in the skin. It is not an indication of cancer, an infection or any internal illness.

Melasma is also known as the "mask of pregnancy". This is because one of the factors, which may cause melasma, is the hormonal stimulation that occurs during a pregnancy. Likewise, other hormonal stimulation such as birth control pill use or estrogen therapy can cause melasma to develop.

Melasma is related to three separate factors. The first is the hormonal stimulation, which I just mentioned having to do with pregnancy, birth control pill use or hormonal replacement. The second factor has to do with your genetic background. Patients who tend to have a darker complexion, such as Italian or Spanish people, are more prone to develop melasma. In some cases, other family members develop the problem.

The third factor related to melasma is sun exposure. Melasma usually gets worse in the summertime. It is extremely important to protect the darker areas from the sun because they will get worse if uncovered.

The treatment for melasma involves the use of a bleaching cream. The treatment response is slow so it is necessary to use the medication once or twice per day for many months. It is best to use the cream first on a small spot on your arm to make sure you are not allergic to it. After two days of use on the arm, it can be used on the facial skin. If this treatment does not work, then there are other types of cream treatment, which will then be used. When using melasma treatment it is extremely important to protect your skin from the sun because a day in the sun can wipe out a month of treatment.

In most cases melasma is strictly a skin problem, which can be helped significantly. If you have any other questions about this condition, please do not hesitate to ask before you leave the office.