

SKIN

I HIT MY 30S AND ALL I GOT WAS A MELASMA MUSTACHE

• by Sara Pollock



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I was on vacation the first time I laid eyes on it. Scrolling through my photos of sunshine, selfies and blueberry ice cream, I spotted an unwelcome dark shadow above my lip-line. What? I had Jolen-d that shit away a week prior! After some frantic research, I learnt that what I was seeing was actually a common form of pigmentation referred to as **melasma** (AKA a sun mustache...attractive!).

Melasma is a skin condition which causes small patches of discoloration, which typically occur on the face and can worsen in the summer. This is triggered by hormones, age and UV damage. As a fair-skinned woman in her 30s who has probably spent more years than they wish to admit on hormonal birth control, I was no stranger to a couple of melasma blemishes. But my upper lip? Could there be a worse location? Feeling like a 12 year old boy entering their first stages of puberty was not exactly my ideal aesthetic.

Every expert will emphasize that prevention is key. A daily application of a good mineral sunscreen (with a minimum of 30 SPF) is an obvious no-brainer for protection against those harmful UV rays which, as we all know, are a one way ticket to skin damage. It's also worth noting that not all sunscreens are created equal. For the best protection against pigmentation, a mineral/physical formulation that uses zinc oxide and titanium dioxide to repel UV rays is your best shield, as it will sit on the surface of your skin and bounce the heat away rather than absorb them.

What if you've been using SPF religiously for years? Annoyingly, the upper lip is the first place for your sun protection to wear off. Makes sense if you consider perspiration, not to mention eating and drinking. Remembering to reapply sunscreen throughout the day is easier said than done, but tossing a handy sunscreen stick such as CeraVe Mineral Sunscreen Stick in your purse makes remembering daily reapplication easier.



Facile Skincare
Brighten Targeted Pigment Serum



Elta MD
UV Elements



CeraVe
Mineral Sunscreen Stick

Even if you're a stickler about SPF, sometimes you need to break out the big guns. So I reached out to **Rachel Hechanova PA-C** of **Facile Dermatology & Boutique** to find out about what other options are available for those of us who feel that we've tried every option but to no avail. In terms of topical treatments, Rachel recommends adding hydroquinone to your routine. Hydroquinone works because it decreases the amount of melanocytes, aka the cells that essentially create pigment on the skin. However, it should only be used for 1-3 months at a time, due to its high potency. Rachel advises that using a compounded cream that combines hydroquinone with other powerhouse ingredients like vitamin C, kojic acid, and tranexamic acid can help fade the pigmentation over time. While it is available OTC, Your best bet is to **chat with a provider** about getting a custom blend for your unique skin.

If you're looking for a treatment solution, consider a gentle resurfacing laser, such as Clear & Brilliant (also known as Baby Fraxel – cute!). Rachel tells me this treatment is highly effective in treating pigmentation. A series of four sessions is strongly recommended, and after that your results can be topped up as required.

While laser treatment is the most effective method of treating melasma, unfortunately there is no permanent fix. The bottom line is that it takes consistent treatments to keep it under control. In the meantime, steering clear of known triggers such as direct heat, saunas, and steam rooms will prevent your pigmentation from worsening. And of course, stay topped up on SPF!

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