



SKIN CAMOUFLAGE

What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about skin camouflage – what products are available, what can be achieved with them and where you can find out more about them.

What is skin camouflage?

Skin camouflage is best described as the application of highly pigmented creams, that are designed to effectively mask skin discolouration and/or scarring. Skin camouflage products are matched to normal skin colour and are significantly different from ordinary cosmetics. When correctly applied, the products are water resistant, allowing you to swim without the fear of the product washing off. Despite the manufacturer's claims, no skin camouflage product should be considered as totally "rub-proof"; there may be some transfer onto clothing, furnishings and bed linen, which can usually be removed by normal household cleansers.

The camouflage should be removed daily using a soap substitute (cleansing cream) or toilet soap and water. This allows you to inspect the skin for any changes to the condition and allows topical medication and emollients to be applied

CAUTION: This leaflet mentions 'emollients' (moisturisers). When paraffin-containing emollient products get in contact with dressings, clothing, bed linen or hair, there is a danger that a naked flame or cigarette smoking could cause these to catch fire. To reduce the fire risk, patients using paraffin-containing skincare or haircare products are advised to avoid naked flames completely, including smoking cigarettes and being near people who are smoking or using naked flames. It is also advisable to wash clothing and bed linen regularly, preferably daily.

What skin conditions are suitable for camouflage use?

Certain skin conditions can make the affected area appear more pale, red, or darker than the unaffected skin. Whilst camouflage products can change visual skin colour the structure of the skin condition will not be altered.

Non-contagious skin conditions (such as vitiligo) and scars are suitable for skin camouflage. The skin must not be inflamed, blistered or broken. Radiotherapy marks and tattoos can also be hidden with skin camouflage.

Skin camouflage is not suitable for skin cancers, infections including bacterial infections (such as impetigo), fungal infections (such as ringworm), viral infections (such as cold sores), or for undiagnosed skin conditions.

Are camouflage products suitable for men?

Skin camouflage products are suitable for men, women and children of all ages, but is not usually recommended for babies or very young children unless suggested by their doctor.

How is the skin camouflage applied?

Many people prefer to apply the camouflage creams using clean fingertips, gently applying the products onto the affected areas. A soft brush is a good tool for applying camouflage over hairline scarring and narrow bands of discoloration, such as stretch marks. A cosmetic sponge may be helpful in covering larger areas. The area is then set with loose powder applied by a powder puff.

A relatively small amount of product will cover a large area of skin. Usually one layer is sufficient to conceal the discoloration; however, if necessary a second layer can be applied. The area should never appear obvious or be thickly applied.

How do I know what colour and product to use?

There is a vast range of pre-mixed skin tones available, but if necessary two colours can be mixed together to create an acceptable skin match. Some brands are better suited to humidity; some give denser coverage or are considered to be longer lasting on the skin than others. A more liquid consistency is preferable for larger areas requiring camouflage.

It may be difficult to make a good choice of skin camouflage that matches normal skin colour without professional assistance. A contact list of useful organisations that can help is listed below.

There are specially trained professionals who can advise you on an acceptable colour for your skin and application techniques. Skin camouflage experts often work within the NHS (usually in the outpatient clinic) and in specialist units such as Burns or Laser departments. They also work in the private sector, such as private hospital clinics or high street beauty salons.

How do I obtain skin camouflage products?

At the time of printing this leaflet, some skin camouflage creams and powders are available on NHS prescription. These are considered discretionary and the reason for camouflage use may be restricted, or denied, due to your local Clinical Commissioning Group's policy. Your GP will advise you what is available and would write the prescription for you to take to your pharmacy. The same products can be purchased without a prescription by ordering them at the prescription counter, or by telephone, letter or the internet to nominated suppliers. You will need to advise your GP or supplier the brand name, colour code and size required - as agreed with you during the skin camouflage consultation.

Supermarkets and department stores sell concealer products and mineral powders, which may be helpful in camouflaging minor discoloration, but may not have the same durability-stability properties as true camouflage products.

Where can I get more information about skin camouflage?

British Association of Skin Camouflage (NHS and private practice)

Tel: 01254 703 107

Email: info@skin-camouflage.net

Web: www.skin-camouflage.net

Changing Faces

Tel: 0300 012 0276 (for the Skin Camouflage Service)

Email: skincam@changingfaces.org.uk

Web: www.changingfaces.org.uk

For details of source materials used please contact the Clinical Standards Unit (clinicalstandards@bad.org.uk).

This leaflet aims to provide accurate information about the subject and is a consensus of the views held by representatives of the British Association of Dermatologists: individual patient circumstances may differ, which might alter both the advice and course of therapy given to you by your doctor.

This leaflet has been assessed for readability by the British Association of Dermatologists' Patient Information Lay Review Panel

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