



[Authoritative facts](#) about the skin from the [New Zealand Dermatological Society Incorporated](#).

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## Skin pigmentation

The colour of skin is mainly due to the amount of brown melanin pigment mixed with blue (from reduced haemoglobin), red (from oxyhaemoglobin) and yellow (from carotenoids in the diet). The amount of melanin is determined by constitutional colour (white, brown or black skin) and skin [phototype](#), i.e. the result of exposure to ultraviolet radiation (tanning).

Increase in melanin (hyperpigmentation or hypermelanosis) can be due to an increased number of pigment cells (melanocytes) or from increased production of melanin.

Reduction in melanin results in pale patches (hypopigmentation or hypomelanosis) or white patches (leucoderma).

### Pale or white skin/patches

[Albinism](#)  
[Atrophie blanche](#)  
[Degos disease](#)  
[Halo moles](#)  
[Chemical leukoderma](#)  
[Hypomelanosis of Ito](#)  
[Idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis](#)  
[Leprosy](#)  
[Lichen sclerosus](#)  
[Lupus erythematosus](#)  
[Morphoea](#)  
[Mycosis fungoides](#)  
[Piebaldism](#)  
[Pityriasis alba](#)  
[Pityriasis versicolor](#)  
[Postinflammatory](#) (trauma, burns, skin disease)  
[Sarcoidosis](#)  
[Systemic sclerosis](#)  
[Tuberous sclerosis](#) (ashleaf spots)  
[Vitiligo](#)

### Darker skin patches

[Acanthosis nigricans](#)  
[Alkaptonuria](#)  
[Becker naevus](#)  
[Berloque dermatitis](#)  
[Chloasma \(melasma\)](#)  
[Confluent & reticulated papillomatosis](#)  
[Congenital naevi](#)  
[Fixed drug eruption](#)  
[Erythema ab igne](#)  
[Erythrasma](#)  
[Flagellate erythema](#)  
[Freckles, lentiginos](#)  
[Laugier-Hunziker syndrome](#)  
[Melanoma](#)  
[Moles](#)  
[Mongolian spot](#)  
[Morphoea \(morphea\)](#)  
[Naevi of Ota & Ito](#)  
[Neurofibromatosis](#)  
[Ochronosis](#)  
[Pigmented purpura](#)  
[Pityriasis versicolor](#) (tinea versicolor)  
[Poikiloderma of Civatte](#)  
[Postinflammatory](#) (trauma, burns, skin disease)  
[Purpura](#)  
[Tinea nigra](#)  
[Urticaria pigmentosa, mastocytosis](#)

### Generally dark skin

[Addison's disease](#)  
[Drug-induced pigmentation](#) (phenothiazines, silver, chemotherapy)  
[Haemochromatosis](#)  
[Ichthyosis](#)  
[Sézary syndrome](#)  
[Porphyria cutanea tarda](#)  
[Systemic sclerosis](#)  
[Wilson disease](#)

DermNet does not provide an on-line consultation service.  
If you have any concerns with your skin or its treatment, see a [dermatologist](#) for advice.

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