



## **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 mimic the unaffected skin colour whilst covering 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 or soap substitute (cleansing cream) and water. This allows you to inspect the skin for any changes to the condition and allows topical medication, sun protection, and emollients to be applied.

### **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 texture and structure of the skin condition will not be altered.

Non-contagious skin conditions (such as vitiligo and birthmarks) 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, 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 are not usually recommended for babies or very young children, unless suggested by their doctor.

### **How is the skin camouflage applied?**

Apply your camouflage cream using clean fingertips, gently applying the product to the affected area. A soft brush can help apply camouflage over hairline scars and narrow areas of discoloured skin, such as stretch marks. A cosmetic sponge may be useful 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 cover the affected skin area; however, if necessary, a second layer can be applied. Applying a thin layer of camouflage is advisable to make it less noticeable.

### **How do I know what colour and product to use?**

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

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 and assist you with choosing 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. Access to camouflage services may be restricted, or denied, due to your local Clinical Commissioning Group's policy. Your GP will advise you on what is available and, based on your local policy, 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 covering minor discoloration but may not have the same durability-stability properties as true camouflage products.

**CAUTION:**

This leaflet mentions 'emollients' (moisturisers). Emollients, creams, lotions and ointments contain oils. When emollient products get in contact with dressings, clothing, bed linen or hair, there is a danger that they could catch fire more easily. There is still a risk if the emollient products have dried. People using skincare or haircare products should be very careful near naked flames or lit cigarettes. Wash clothing daily and bedlinen frequently, if they are in contact with emollients. This may not remove the risk completely, even at high temperatures. Caution is still needed. More information may be obtained at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safe-use-of-emollient-skin-creams-to-treat-dry-skin-conditions>.

**Where can I get more information about skin camouflage?**

*Changing Faces*

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

Email: [skincam@changingfaces.org.uk](mailto:skincam@changingfaces.org.uk)

Web: [www.changingfaces.org.uk](http://www.changingfaces.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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