

## Referral Support Service

## Dermatology

### D19

### Vitiligo

#### Definition

- Vitiligo is an acquired condition with complete loss of skin pigment resulting in discrete white patches. [Images](#)
- It affects about 1% of the world population and any part of the body can be affected.

#### Exclude Red Flag Symptoms

- Consider: pityriasis alba (hypopigmented patches on the face in childhood and adolescence).
- Leprosy (thickened, hypopigmented anaesthetic patches of skin).

#### Management

##### Sun protection advice

- Is essential
- The white skin will not tan, but will burn.
- If surrounding skin tans the white patches will be more apparent.

##### Cosmetic camouflage

- Very useful as no treatments are very successful in reversing the depigmentation.
- Available from [changing faces](#). Patient can self-refer.

**Potent or very potent topical steroid.** Do NOT use on the face or flexural skin. Useful to first try on one patch on body or limbs. Potency of a topical corticosteroid preparation is a result of the formulation as well as the corticosteroid. Therefore, prescribe by brand name.

- **Mometasone fuorate** 0.1% as cream or ointment = **Elocon®** (potent)
- **Clobetasol Propionate** 0.05% as cream or ointment = **Dermovate®** (very potent)
- May be used for a trial period of up to 2 months
- Be aware of problems with steroid side effects.

##### **Refer to dermatology for consideration of other treatments if patient distressed by condition**

- Calcineurin inhibitors; eg. topical **Cyclosporine** and **Tacrolimus** (specialist recommendation)
- Narrowband UVB
- Laser treatment
- PUVA
- Depigmentation of normal skin if very extensive
- Consider screening for auto-immune conditions

## **Referral Information**

### **Investigations prior to referral**

- Associated with other autoimmune diseases so exclude; diabetes, pernicious anaemia, thyroid disease, Addison's disease and alopecia areata – with blood tests if appropriate.

### **Information to include in referral letter**

- Site and extent of white patches
- Skin type (skin colour)
- **Photographs are required**
- How long since problem began
- Any treatments tried already
- Relevant past/surgical history
- Current regular medication
- BMI/Smoking status

## **Patient information leaflets/ PDAs**

- Patient information leaflets are available from the [British Association of Dermatologists](#) or [patient.co.uk](#).
- Patient information is also available from the [vitiligo society](#).

## **References**

- Excellent clear information and lots of images available from [Primary Care Dermatology Society](#)
- Useful information also available on [dermnet website](#)