

Acne Scars and Dark Spots

Acne can be a devastating disorder – not only is it frustrating to have active acne in the form of spots, redness and pustules, these lesions can leave their mark in the form of scars and dark spots.

In this article I will address the difference between scarring and dark spots. When people call our clinic they will ask me about their acne “scarring”, but quite often what they really mean is the dark spots left over from an acne breakout. This is called hyperpigmentation - also called post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (PIH).

Actual scarring is where the skin is pitted or depressed. These type of scars usually take a more aggressive medical modality to see results. For more in-depth information about medical scar treatments go to <http://www.acne.org/scars.php>. We have had some success with using a strong peel solution in the scar itself done bi-weekly for at least 8 treatments.

Let's talk about dark spots – that is something we definitely can do something about. Post Inflammatory Hyperpigmentation, or PIH, is the medical term given to discoloration of the skin that follows an inflammatory wound. PIH presents itself as a flat area of discoloration on the skin ranging from pink to red, purple, brown or black, depending on your skin tone and depth of the discoloration.

PIH develops when a wound, rash, pimple, or other stimuli like picking at your acne lesions causes skin inflammation, which triggers the skin to produce too much melanin. Melanin is the protein in the skin that gives the skin its color. The excess melanin darkens and discolors the wounded area. This discoloration remains even after the wound or rash has healed.

PIH is very common among acne sufferers. It can occur in all skin types, although it is more common in darker skin tones. It affects both men and women equally. Luckily, PIH is not a true scar and therefore can be treated in the clinic quite effectively.

We use chemical peels solutions in various strengths to not only help with acne clearing but lift the dark spots as well. The acne usually goes away first before the redness or the darker spots go away. It usually takes another few months for the dark spots or redness to completely clear. We also give our clients homecare routines that contribute to the lightening of hyperpigmentation. The right home care and consistent treatments will clear the acne and lift the dark spots simultaneously. Understand that improvement takes time.