

The effects of skin aging vary depending on ethnicity, review finds

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The population in the United States is expected to become increasingly older, with estimates indicating that by the year 2030, nearly 40 percent of Americans will be over the age of 65.

As people are living longer, their skin is not only chronologically, or

biologically aging, but it is also being exposed to [environmental factors](#), such as sunlight, which can cause age-related damage to the skin.

Neelam Vashi, MD, director of the Center for Ethnic Skin at Boston Medical Center, has published a review paper in *Clinics in Dermatology* that discusses how aging presents in patients, and the differences that are attributed to skin type, exposures and [genetic factors](#).

For the review, the researchers examined 41 peer-reviewed published articles between 1970 and 2018 that focused on aging in ethnic skin through PubMed. The data included in the articles demonstrate that all skin types will show signs of damage from exposure to Ultraviolet rays from the sun, which include skin discoloration, loss of collagen and/or [skin cancer](#).

Here are some key findings from the review:

- Melanin is a key difference in those of light and dark skin types
- Patients of color are more likely to experience changes in pigmentation (dyschromia)
- Key differences in fibroblasts (cells that promote wound healing and collagen production) account for increased skin thickness of African-American patients, resulting in [wrinkles](#) that appear several years later than white counterparts
- Patients of East Asian descent have a higher likelihood of experiencing hyperpigmentation, but wrinkles don't form as early in the aging process
- Patients of Hispanic descent also experience fewer wrinkles earlier in the aging process
- Patients of Caucasian descent (European, North African, Southwest Asian ancestry) more commonly have thinner skin and experience wrinkles, loss of skin elasticity, and reduced lip volume

"Aging is inevitable, and each person will have a unique experience with how their skin changes as it ages," said Vashi, who is also an associate professor of dermatology at Boston University School of Medicine.

As a dermatologist, Vashi treats a large number of patients for a variety of skin conditions related to aging. The one treatment she always recommends is UV protection, which helps shield all skin types from the sun's harmful rays. "Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the US, and using sunscreen is an extremely important practice to protect your skin," added Vashi.

Some of the other available treatments for skin aging include:

- Topical agents, antioxidants, chemical peels and lasers can be effective to treat dyschromia
- Botulinum and toxin and soft-tissue fillers can help treat wrinkles and sagging [skin](#)

More information: Samantha Venkatesh et al, Aging in skin of color, *Clinics in Dermatology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.clindermatol.2019.04.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clindermatol.2019.04.010)

Provided by Boston Medical Center

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