My vitiligo is starting to get in the way of my sex life — Help!

Hello Alice,

I have Vitiligo on my penis and on other parts of my body, but it's really starting to mess with my head with girls when they first see my penis. I mean, there's nothing wrong with it, it just has loss of pigmentation. What should I do?

Answer

Dear Reader,

In order to help keep your head clear, it's important to know the facts about vitiligo. Vitiligo is a rather common skin condition affecting about 1 percent of the world's population. Vitiligo is marked by the loss of skin pigment, leaving patches or whole areas of the body completely white. It affects both sexes and people of all races and all ages. The white patches of skin are caused by the loss of cells that produce melanin (melanocytes), which are responsible for providing skin pigment. Why those melanocytes disappear, though, has not yet been determined.

It isn't clear from your question if the women you are with say something about your penis, or if you, yourself, are worried about what they may be thinking. If you find yourself in an intimate situation with someone and notice that she's looking quizzically down below, you might want to take a second to explain what vitiligo is. As common as it may be, most people don't know much about it or even what it's called. A brief explanation suffices, especially if you have other patches of white skin elsewhere on your body. This will probably help dissipate any anxiety that your vitiligo is some condition affecting only your penis, or that it might be contagious and impact someone else.

Learning to appreciate and value your unique trademark can help you feel more at ease with your condition. Plus, the more comfortable you are with your own body, the more comfortable your partners will be.

Some people with vitiligo, however, choose to cover up the patches of non-pigmented skin that show outside of their clothes by using cosmetics or self-tanning lotions. Self-tanning lotions don't need melanocytes, unlike getting a tan from the sun or tanning beds, so they can temporarily
color the white patches of skin. It is not safe or healthy to put self-tanning lotions on your genitals, and you probably won’t want to cover your penis with cosmetics that would rub off onto your underwear or other clothing anyway.

Your best bet is to simply acknowledge that your penis looks different from others your partner might have seen before and then to move on. Most likely, your partner(s) will move forward with you and no longer notice the color of your penis. What a boring world it would be if every penis looked exactly the same!

Alice!
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