



## Skin deep

### Description

**World Vitiligo Day on 25 June reminds us that Vitiligo is more than a skin condition – it's a lived experience that deserves understanding, empathy and a seat at the table.**

Vitiligo is a chronic autoimmune condition in which the body's immune system mistakenly attacks melanocytes – the specialised cells responsible for producing melanin, the pigment that gives our skin, hair and eyes their colour. The result is that distinctive patches can appear anywhere on the body, including the face, hands and scalp.

The condition affects roughly 1-2% of the global population and is particularly visible in people with darker skin tones, making it especially significant in the South African context. While not contagious, painful or life-threatening, the emotional and social impact can be profound as people living with the condition often report social anxiety, lowered self-esteem and, in some cases, discrimination. – and that's where all of us can play a role.

# 5 Ways to support SOMEONE WITH VITILIGO

In the workplace, at home and in your community



1



### Listen first, fix nothing

Create a safe space for your colleague, friend or family member to share how they feel without jumping in to solve anything or minimise their experience. A simple "I hear you" goes a long way.



2



### Educate yourself

Learn about vitiligo so your loved one doesn't have to carry the burden of explaining it to every person they meet, allowing you to help correct misconceptions if they come up.

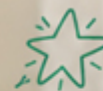


3



### Affirm the whole person

Remind them they are so much more than their skin. Celebrate their wins, their humour, their brilliance. Avoid placing too much focus on how their skin looks, whether that's in sympathy or in compliments.



4



### Be their wing person

Help them navigate social situations where stares or awkward comments might arise. If you're together in public and someone says something thoughtless, calmly step in, redirect the conversation and move on.



5



### Connect them to community

Isolation is one of the biggest challenges people with vitiligo face. Help your loved one find support groups, online communities or professional counselling that specialises in chronic skin conditions.



A great local starting point.

## **Faces of vitiligo**

### **Leleti Khumalo | South African actress | Sarafina!, Generations**

One of South Africa's most beloved actresses, Leleti developed vitiligo at 19. Acting in *Imbewu: The Seed*, she chose to appear without makeup cover, sparking a national conversation about vitiligo awareness and self-acceptance.

### **Michael Jackson | 1958 – 2009**

The King of Pop was officially confirmed to have vitiligo in his autopsy report. Jackson spoke openly about his condition and his changing appearance brought global awareness to vitiligo.

### **Melquizael "The Dalmatian" Costa | UFC featherweight fighter | Brazil**

Diagnosed with vitiligo at age four, Costa faced discrimination growing up as people mistook his condition for leprosy. Today he is a proud UFC featherweight competitor who uses his platform to inspire others to embrace who they are.

## **Category**

1. Our DEI

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