



# When Medicines Speak Through Your Skin

## by Tatiana Morales

Our skin is more than just a surface—it's a storyteller. Often, it reveals what's happening inside the body, and sometimes, medicines are part of that story. From dryness to rashes, color changes, or sensitivity, here are some of the ways medications can leave their mark.

### Sun-Sensitivity

Have you ever taken an antibiotic, gone outside for a quick walk, and ended up with a sunburn you didn't expect? Some medicines—like certain antibiotics, water pills, acne retinoids, or heart drugs—make the skin extra sensitive to the sun. Even a little exposure can cause redness, rashes, or burning. Protect yourself with shade, hats, and sunscreen.

### Dryness from Acne Medications

Strong acne treatments, like isotretinoin, can work wonders for breakouts but often come with side effects. Chapped lips, peeling skin, and eye dryness are

common. The good news? With gentle cleansers, a nourishing moisturizer, lip balm, and daily SPF, your skin can stay much more comfortable during treatment.

### Thinning from Steroid Creams

Steroid creams are powerful helpers for eczema or rashes. But if used for too long or at high strength, they can thin the skin. This can lead to easy bruising, stretch marks, or even acne-like bumps. Always follow your provider's instructions and use the mildest option needed.

### Changes in Skin Color

Sometimes, medicines can change the skin's pigment:

- Hormones or birth control can cause melasma—brown patches on the face.
- Amiodarone, a heart medication, may create a bluish-gray tone on sun-exposed areas.
- Hydroxychloroquine, often used for autoimmune conditions, can leave blue-gray marks on skin or nails.

## Bruising & Bleeding

Blood thinners, which protect against clots, can also make bruises appear more easily. Small cuts may bleed longer too. This doesn't mean the medicine isn't working—it just means your skin shows the effects more clearly. Always let your doctor know if you notice large or unusual bruises.

## When the Gut and Liver Get Involved

Sometimes the skin changes are linked to how medicines affect the inside of the body first:

- Antibiotics can disturb the gut's good bacteria, leading to inflammation that shows up as acne, rashes, or sensitivity.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is processed by the liver, and when the liver is stressed, the skin may look itchy, dull, or even yellow in severe cases.
- Ibuprofen or Naproxen can irritate the gut if taken often, which may worsen conditions like rosacea, eczema, or acne.
- Oral Steroids are life-saving for many conditions, but long-term use can thin the skin, cause bruising, and slow healing.



## The Bigger Picture

These are just a few examples. Many other medicines—from heart and blood pressure drugs to chemotherapy and even common over-the-counter remedies—can affect the skin too. The key is to listen. If your skin changes after starting a new medication, note when it began, take photos, and talk to your provider.

## Simple Habits for Protection

- Stick to gentle, fragrance-free products (cleanser, moisturizer, sunscreen).
- Be sun smart: use shade, hats, and SPF daily.
- Don't add strong actives (like retinoids or acids) without checking first.
- Keep a skin diary to track changes after starting new medications.

Your skin is a storyteller. When it speaks, pay attention—it may be sharing important messages about what's happening inside.



**Tatiana Morales**

Hale & Hush Educator / Educador