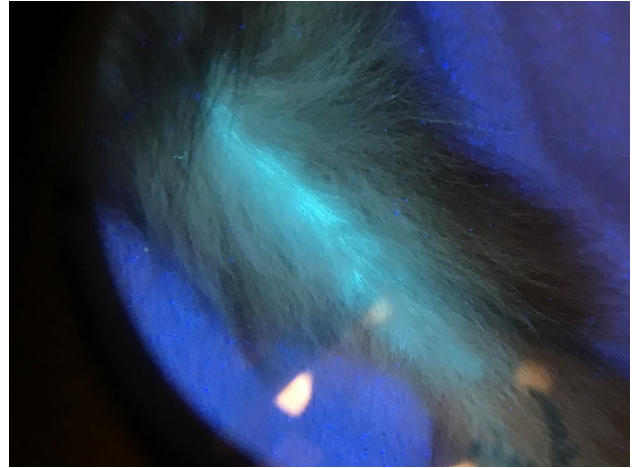
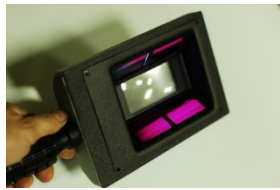


What Does a Wood's Lamp Exam Show?

The Wood's lamp exam shows areas of skin that are pigmented, depigmented, or fluorescent. Normal, healthy skin appears blue under a Wood's lamp and does not glow. It may show white spots where the skin is thick, yellow spots where it's oily, or purple where it's dehydrated. A positive result means there are obvious differences in your skin's appearance.



What Can a Wood's Lamp Exam Diagnose?

A Wood's lamp can diagnose a variety of conditions, including:

Tinea capitis. *Tinea capitis* is a fungal infection that causes areas of baldness and scaling. The fungal species that cause tinea capitis look blue-green or dull blue under the Wood's lamp. Fungal infections caused by other species don't show up.

Vitiligo. Vitiligo is a [skin disease](#) where the skin loses its color in patches. Melanin produces skin color. Vitiligo occurs in areas where cells that produce melanin die or stop functioning. A Wood's lamp can identify affected areas in light-skinned people. These areas will have sharper borders under black light and will look bright blue-white or yellow-green.

Ringworm. Like tinea capitis, [ringworm](#), or tinea corporis, is a skin infection caused by a fungus. It's a red, itchy, circular rash that gets its name from its appearance. There are no worms involved.

Porphyria. [Porphyria](#) is a group of eight inherited disorders that affect the skin and nervous system. People with porphyria that affects the skin are often sensitive to sunlight and may have abrasions and blisters on their skin. Under a Wood's lamp, porphyria shows up as red-pink.

Pigment disorders. A Wood's lamp can detect other changes in [your skin's pigmentation](#) besides vitiligo. Hypopigmentation, or loss of pigmentation, can be difficult to see in fair-skinned people. Under a Wood's lamp, areas of hypopigmentation have sharper borders and show up as bright blue-white. Hyperpigmentation, which has more melanin than normal, also shows up with sharper borders under a Wood's lamp because areas with more melanin absorb more light.

Pityrosporum folliculitis. This is an infection of the [hair follicles](#) caused by yeast. It's normally on the upper back and chest. Because it can look like acne, it can be difficult to diagnose. Under a Wood's lamp, it will look yellow-green.

Bacterial infections. Infections from bacteria like [Pseudomonas](#) look bright green under a Wood's lamp. *Pseudomonas* is especially dangerous in burn wounds since it's hard to treat. It can lead to a fatal complication of infection called sepsis.

Head lice. Nits from [head lice](#) can be difficult to tell from dried hairspray or hair casts. Live nits glow white under a Wood's lamp, and empty nit cases look gray.



Other Uses for a Wood's Lamp

Doctors are not the only professionals who use Wood's lamps. Here are some of their other health-related uses:

- Molecular biology labs may use a Wood's lamp to detect compounds with a fluorescent tag.
- Ophthalmologists can use one to look for scratches and foreign objects in the cornea of the eye.
- Aestheticians use them to check for signs of aging skin and other imperfections.
- Veterinarians use a Wood's lamp to check pets for bacterial, fungal, or parasitic infection.