Skinfootnote 1

Are there any pills or medicines available which could whiten overall complexion? If so, are they safe to use?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Love the skin you’re in! Whether you yearn to lighten your skin tone or even out your complexion, be warned — skin lightening creams have not been approved for any medical purpose by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and are not well-regulated. In some cultures, lighter skin is a way to elevate one’s social standing, or is seen as a way to happiness, success, or romance. But the truth is, skin lightening can be a dangerous business.

Even skin-lightening creams that do list ingredients may not fully disclose every ingredient. Some common skin lightening creams contain dangerous active ingredients, including:

- **Mercuric chloride** - users of this chemical run the risk of mercury poisoning, which can cause burning pain, neurological damage, and kidney damage. It has been banned in most countries (such as Europe and the U.S.) for use in skin whitening products because it is readily absorbed through the skin.
- **Clobetasol propionate** (found in Hyprogel) - this is a strong topical steroid prescribed by dermatologists that has never been approved for use on the face. Overuse can cause the thinning of skin, hypertension, infertility, increased appetite and weight gain, deposits of fat around the chest, face, back, and stomach, osteoporosis, cataracts, acne, slower wound healing, muscle weakness, and stretch marks.
- **Hydroquinone** (found in the product, Fair & White): Fair & White contains 1.9% hydroquinone, but bootleg versions have been found to contain up to 5%. Misuse sometimes causes a bluish-black darkening of the skin. This chemical has been banned by the European Union, and the U.S. is considering a ban on over-the-counter sales due to a possible link between hydroquinone and cancer.

Another important note: skin lightening products lower the amount of melanin in your skin, leaving your body more vulnerable to UV rays, skin cancer, and ageing. If you want to stay fair, you may want to simply stay out of the sun, and use sun protection products when you head out. What a great way to double your protection against skin cancer, too!

Given that chemical skin lightening has a range of serious side effects, the best advice is to steer clear of these products. If you have any questions about skin lightening, it is recommended to consult a health care provider, such as a dermatologist. Here’s to relishing...
in your natural beauty!

Alice!
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