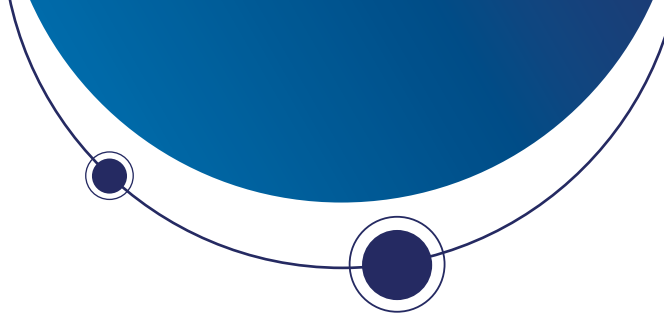




## DID YOU KNOW?

It is best to check the labels of skin products for ingredients that may pose a health risk. Avoid products with handmade labels, labels in languages other than English, or no label at all. Products like these are in violation of FDA regulations and may be harmful.



Get the Skin Facts! about skin product safety by visiting [www.fda.gov/SkinFacts](http://www.fda.gov/SkinFacts).

If you experience a bad reaction from the use of a skin product, please contact your health care provider. Report it to the FDA at [www.fda.gov/medwatch/report.htm](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch/report.htm) or by calling **1-800-FDA-1088**.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

 [www.fda.gov/healthequity](http://www.fda.gov/healthequity)

 [healthequity@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:healthequity@fda.hhs.gov)

 1-888-INFO-FDA  
(1-888-463-6332)

 @FDAHealthEquity

## KNOW WHAT'S IN YOUR SKIN PRODUCTS



**SkinFacts!**  
What You Need to Know About  
SKIN LIGHTENING PRODUCTS



**FDA Office of Minority  
Health and Health Equity**



## What are skin lightening products?

“Skin lightening” is a term for products marketed to lighten the pigmentation (color) of your skin. Some alternative names may include:



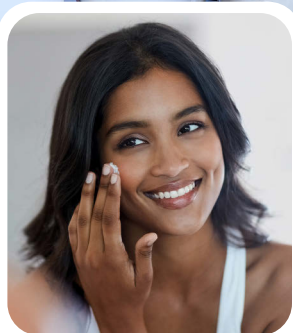
- Skin brighteners or whiteners
- Skin bleaching agents
- Skin evening products
- Spot correctors
- Fading creams
- Chemical peels

Skin lightening products are advertised to treat a variety of skin conditions such as skin discoloration/hyperpigmentation (melasma), age or dark spots, freckles, acne, and wrinkles.



## Are there any harmful ingredients in skin lightening products?

Hydroquinone and mercury are two ingredients sometimes found in illegal skin lightening products sold in the form of creams, lotions, soaps, or powders. When you use these ingredients on your skin, they are absorbed into your body and may build up with continued use, which can be harmful.



## What are the health risks of hydroquinone?

The FDA has received reports of serious side effects from the use of skin lightening products containing hydroquinone, including rashes, facial swelling, and permanent skin discoloration (ochronosis).

## What are the health risks of mercury?

Mercury is a highly toxic metal that can damage the nervous, digestive, and immune systems, and the lungs, kidneys, skin, and eyes. Even other members of your household who don't use the product can be exposed to mercury by breathing in mercury vapors in the air or touching contaminated surfaces. Mercury is especially harmful to the developing brains and nervous systems of young children.

Signs of mercury poisoning include: irritability, tremors, vision or hearing changes, memory problems, depression, numbness and tingling in hands, feet, or around the mouth.

Mercury poisoning can also cause coma or even death.

**If you are experiencing any of the symptoms of mercury poisoning, call Poison Control at 1-(800)-222-1222 and contact your health care provider immediately.**

## What is the FDA doing to protect the public from these ingredients in skin lightening products?

The over-the-counter sale of skin lightening products containing hydroquinone or mercury is illegal. The FDA can take action against anyone that sells these products over the counter.

You can get a prescription skin product containing hydroquinone from your health care provider. The FDA allows mercury to be used in certain cosmetics as a preservative in very small amounts if there is no safe and effective alternative. However, the use of mercury in any skin lightening cosmetic is banned.

## What should I look for when purchasing an over-the-counter skin lightening product?

Read product labels to check for hydroquinone or mercury. Federal law requires companies to list ingredients on the label of any cosmetic or nonprescription (over-the-counter) product sold in the U.S. Note that mercury may be listed as **mercurous chloride, calomel, mercuric, mercurio,** or **Hg.**

Some illegal skin lightening products containing hydroquinone or mercury may not list these ingredients on the label. Avoid products with handmade labels, labels in languages other than English, or no label at all. Products like these are in violation of FDA regulations and may be harmful.

