Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Bruce Gulland. And I’m Liz Waid. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand no matter where in the world they live.

Gina had beautiful dark brown skin. But she thought her skin was too dark. Gina did not like her skin. The Guardian Newspaper told Gina’s story. She felt that to be successful and good looking her skin needed to be lighter. Gina bought some skin whitening cream. It promises to make her skin lighter. She uses 2 times each day. After a few days, her skin did look lighter. She began to use it 6 or 7 times each day. However, after several months she noticed dark marks on her legs and the side of her face. The chemical has burnt and marked her skin permanently. The skin whitening cream also made Gina’s blood pressure very high. And her body stop producing a chemical necessary for life. Gina almost died trying to have lighter skin. Other people have also had similar experiences. So why do people keep using these products. Today’s spotlight is on skin whitening.

Skin whitening is a multi-billion dollar market. Skin whiteners can be rubbed on the skin as a cream or lotion. They can be injected into the body with a needle. And these products are popular all over the world. In India, skin whitening has almost become an accepted part of culture. Lighter skin is supposed to help a person get a rich, good looking, more intelligent husband or wife. Vina Karma is a dark skin 18 years old. He uses whitener each month. He told the Washington Post: I want to be rich and light skin like my film hero. To be light skin will make me be so smart.

Skin whiteners do have a medical purpose. For example, they can help people who have marks on a medical operation. When skin heals sometimes it leaves scars. The scars are darker than the surrounding skin. People can feel embarrassed and shamed by these scars. Skin whiteners can make the scar lighter. These people only use the whiteners on the affected area for a limited time. But for people who use whiteners on large area of their bodies there are great risks. There are many different chemical in skin whiteners. Some of these chemicals can cause wounds, burns and even marks on the skin. They can cause blood cancer or diseases. In severe cases, a person kidney will stop working. Many whiteners contain mercury – a substance that is poisonous to humans. High mercury levels are link to blindness, hearing loss and shaking. People cannot control. Whiteners can also change your personality. People using skin whiteners may worry more. They may not be able to sleep or they may forget things. But even when they know these risks, people are still willing to whiten their skin. People even use skin whiteners on their children. This can cause even more harm to a child developing body.

What makes people want to change the color of their skin. One reason is advertising. How skin whiteners are sold. In this advertisement the lighter your skin, the happier you are. For example, in one Indian television advertisement there is a man who has no luck with girls. He has darker skin than his friends. Suddenly, an Indian film star appears and hands him whitening cream. Soon, the young man skin has become lighter as he walks down the road, girls run to him and call him good looking.

Another reason for the popularity of whitener maybe that in the past, many countries has been taken over by people with light skin. Overtime white skin became connect with well and success. People notice that people with lighter skin got better treatment. They got better jobs. But even when these countries became independent again. These ideas about skin color remained.

But some people are holding until their natural beauty. Eki Dugar is an India Artist. She is fighting against skin whitening. She believes that Indians have accepted false messages about white skin. This is because Indians were under British rule for many years. She explains the problems to the Washington Post.

White meant wealth, white was someone is rich enough to never work in the sun. It is all around in India. The message that light skin means more success in life. There is a very sad message that if you are dark, you will never have success.

This is another reason skin whitener are popular, in 2018, the Guardian Newspaper reported that some people do benefit from lighter skin. They reported on a study from 2011, this study looked at the amount of time women in the US were sent to prison. Lighter skin black women were given less time in prison than darker skin black women. Other studies showed similar results. Lighter skin people often get better jobs. They have an advantage over darker skin people.

But this does not have to be the truth forever. Another person against to skin whitening is Anecious Bishao. She runs the Mrs. India South Africa Beauty Contest. She told South African News Organization IOL.

It is understandable that most women want to have a beautiful clear skin. But when they want to change how they look. That becomes a problem. Over time, the use of skin whitening creams damages skins and make a person darker. I would be careful even with skin whiteners that claim to be totally natural. Because they may contain a small amount of chemicals.

And even some governments are beginning to recognize the dangers of skin whiteners. In 2019, the President of Rwanda Pall Cagarmay directed health workers to bend skin whiteners. However women in the country were not happy. They believe it is their right to use skin whitener. And this is happening all around the world. Many countries have made the substances in skin whiteners illegal. People know the dangers to their bodies and health. But many people still use skin whiteners.

What about you? Do you use skin whiteners? Do you think they should be illegal? Tell us what you think. You can leave a comment on our website or email us at radio@radioenglish.net. You can also comment on Facebook at facebook.com/spotlightradio.

The writer of this program was Adam Navis. The producer was Michio Ozaki. The voices you heard were from the United Kingdom and the United States. All quotes were adapted for this program and voiced Spotlight. You can listen to this program again and read it on the Internet at [www.radioenglish.net](http://www.radioenglish.net/). This program is called skin whitening.

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