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Skin Lighteners



Skin lightening products can contain some highly toxic chemicals linked to serious health concerns including cancer, respiratory harm, and organ-system toxicity. Women of color are the primary demographic targeted through the marketing of these toxic beauty products, which also include hair dyes, hair relaxers and straighteners, feminine douches,

and deodorants. As a result, women and girls of color suffer from a higher level of exposure to unsafe chemicals in these products. This toxic exposure is of particular concern to Black women because they purchase and use more beauty products per capita than any other demographic and face many health disparities, including the highest breast cancer mortality rate of any U.S. racial or ethnic group.

Science

[Hydroquinone \(/chemicals/hydroquinone/\)](/chemicals/hydroquinone/) is most used in skin lighteners, products that are most heavily marketed towards women of color. It is linked to cancer and organ-system toxicity. While hydroquinone is banned in over-the-counter products the U.S., there are certain medical conditions for which hydroquinone may be prescribed. Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits involved in using hydroquinone.

[Read More > \(/chemicals/hydroquinone/\)](/chemicals/hydroquinone/)

Campaign

The [Safer Beauty Bill Package \(https://www.bcphp.org/resource/safer-beauty-bill-package-2021/\)](https://www.bcphp.org/resource/safer-beauty-bill-package-2021/) in U.S. Congress includes the [Cosmetic Safety for Communities of Color and Professional Salon Workers Act of 2021 \(https://www.bcphp.org/resource/cosmetic-safety-for-communities-of-color-and-professional-salon-workers-act-of-2021/\)](https://www.bcphp.org/resource/cosmetic-safety-for-communities-of-color-and-professional-salon-workers-act-of-2021/), which seeks to create cosmetic safety protections for women of color, who are at risk of unsafe exposures because of the toxic chemicals in the products marketed to them, like skin lighteners. Take action to make beauty and personal care products safer for all!

[Take Action > \(/action-alerts/support-the-safer-beauty-bill-package/\)](/action-alerts/support-the-safer-beauty-bill-package/)

Products of Concern

- Skin lighteners
- Facial and skin cleansers
- Facial moisturizers

Chemicals of Concern

[Benzophenone & Related Compounds \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/benzophenone/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/benzophenone/)

[Formaldehyde And Formaldehyde-Releasing Preservatives \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/formaldehyde/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/formaldehyde/)

[Fragrance \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/fragrance/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/fragrance/)

[Hydroquinone \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/hydroquinone/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/hydroquinone/)

[Octinoxate \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/octinoxate/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/octinoxate/)

[Preservatives \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/preservatives/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/chemicals/preservatives/)

[View all Chemicals of Concern > \(/chemicals/\)](/chemicals/)



[. \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Product-Skin-Lighteners-1.webp\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Product-Skin-Lighteners-1.webp)

Tips

1. **Read Labels:** Check ingredient labels to avoid the above chemicals of concern found in body care products.
2. **Simplify:** Choose products with simpler ingredient lists and fewer synthetic chemicals. Select products that fully disclose their fragrance ingredients by skipping products with “fragrance” on the label.
3. **Minimalist:** Using fewer products is the easiest and cheapest way to reduce your risk by minimizing your exposure to harmful chemicals in cosmetics.

4. **Use an App:** Get Clearya or Think Dirty to find out whether products are toxic as you shop.
5. **Look Beyond:** Since the beauty industry is largely unregulated, there are no legal standards for personal care products that are labeled “clean,” “pure,” “natural,” or “organic.” Look beyond false marketing claims by reading ingredient labels.
6. **DIY:** Many products are easy and fun to make yourself. Plus, you can customize your recipes to match your specific beauty concerns and favorites. Make your own moisturizer, sugar or salt scrub, body oil, and more using simple, organic ingredients.

Explore other products

- [Anti-Aging \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/anti-aging/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/anti-aging/)
- [Body \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/body/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/body/)
- [Dental \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/dental/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/dental/)
- [Fragrance \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/fragrance/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/fragrance/)
- [Hair \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/hair/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/hair/)
- [Makeup \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/makeup/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/makeup/)
- [Nail \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/nail/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/nail/)
- [Skin Lighteners \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/skin-lighteners/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/skin-lighteners/)
- [Sunscreens \(https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/sunscreens/\)](https://www.safecosmetics.org/products/sunscreens/)

Looking for a Safer Alternative?

Use Clearya’s app to find non-toxic products! Clearya alerts you to toxics and helps you find safe products.



[Visit Clearya > \(https://www.clearya.com/\)](https://www.clearya.com/)

Your Action Helps

Together, we can make beauty safer for all.

Take Action Today!

(/take-action/)

FILTER BY:

By Population



By Products



By Health Concerns



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