

ASIANA



A BRIGHT FUTURE?

Whilst many such products are purchased by those who have absolutely nothing wrong with their skin, if you are one of the women out there with genuine skin care concerns such as hyperpigmentation or the mask of pregnancy, there are a number of natural alternatives.

'The legal and regulated demand for natural ingredients, and are using plant-based ingredients known for their whitening benefits. Licorice and mulberry root and bearberry extracts are regarded as effective skin whitening ingredients,' says Mintel's Alexandra Richmond.

A leading consultant dermatologist Sandeep Cliff stresses that women who suffer from real skincare problems should see a professional before taking action. He advises: 'A dermatologist will ensure that the cause of the problem can be correctly identified and the most appropriate treatment, if available, be offered.'

'I see women who have used bleaching agents on their skin that contain high potency steroids, which can be damaging to the complexion in so many ways. These products can trigger skin thinning, bruising and stretch marks, yet they are readily available. The problem with these products is that they are clearly misleading and making false claims without emphasising the potential problems.'

But for organisations that promote the empowerment and independence of Asian woman, the fact that so many whitening creams exist in the grey area between safe and harmful is just the start of the problem. It is our attitudes, they say, that needs to change, if we are to become truly comfortable in our skin.

'The rise in skin lighteners shows how the world has given women these artificial needs and desires. The health hazards of many whiteners have hardly been examined or addressed but this condemnable racist projection of fairness as the ultimate "ideal of beauty" has resulted in a grave distortion of aspirations,' says Sudha Sundaraman, General Secretary, of the All India Democratic Women's Association, an organisation that campaigns for women's rights and for their education, employment and status.

If after reading all of this, you are still adamant on using these products to lighten your skin, you should make a conscious effort to educate yourself about the ingredients. A simple internet search will often tell you what you are looking for.

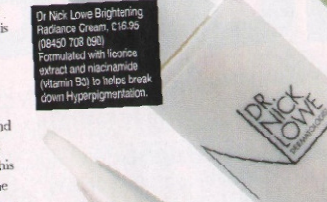
The one absolute fact to remember is that once the damage has been done, there's no going back. But we're not here to judge. If women want to purchase a beauty product and, clearly, many of you do - our job as a beauty magazine is to recommend the best and the safest, and remind you that we exist to promote the belief that brown equals proud. If you must, make sure you use these creams because you want to, not because you feel you have to. Because if you put yourself at risk just to fit in with society, there's little hope of that society ever changing.



Estee Lauder Cyber White Ex Extra Brightening Moisture Lotion, £32. Includes the sugar-derived refinisher N acetyl glucosamine that helps skin shed away surface dark spots.



Priori Coffee berry Brightening Facial Complex, £32 (999 935 2121). Contains antioxidant with coffeeberry to reduce the appearance of uneven skin tone.



Dr Nick Lowe Brightening Radiance Cream, £16.99 (08450 708 650). Formulated with licorice extract and niacinamide (Vitamin B3) to help break down Hyperpigmentation.



SkinVitals Pigmentation Corrector Pen, £10. Enriched with advanced pigmentation diffusing ingredients including white mushroom and vitamin C that helps to minimise the appearance of brown marks, age and sun spots.



Shiseido White Lucency Brightening Eye Treatment, £37. Asian plant extracts including citrus peel, chestnut rose and hypericum extract keep the eye area looking bright.

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BRAND ANALYSIS

We asked skin specialist Sujata Jole and Victoria Smith from the International Dermal Institute to look at the most popular skin lightening brands in the UK and analyse their ingredients.

FAIR AND LOVELY

Sujata says: 'This will treat hyperpigmentation is not a skin bleaching agent.'

Victoria says: 'It focuses on the use of Vitamin C is known for its skin brightening and vitamin A will encourage cell turnover sloughing off pigmented cells quicker.'

They say: 'The safety of Unilever's six formulations have been proven beyond doubt based on not only the use of internationally approved cosmetic ingredients but also, the outcome of all human studies as well as mass usage for over 30 years by millions of consumers across the world.'

JOLEN

Sujata says: 'This contains hydrogen peroxide, which causes a chemical reaction to remove colour from the hair. The reaction causes melanin in the hair shaft to oxidise so that it becomes almost colourless. This process does not affect the skin.'

Victoria says: 'If left on the skin for around ten minutes it should be fine but more sensitive skins may experience redness and irritation.'

They say: 'This has been used safely and effectively for many years.'

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