

Experts warn of dangers of 'skin whitener' cosmetic

專家對於使用美白產品所提出的警告

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Liza Ng, a public relations executive living in Hong Kong, has no time or inclination to cultivate the sporty, tanned look. Instead, she spends hundreds of dollars every month on face masks, scrubs and creams to whiten her complexion.

"I love to be pearly white because that is more beautiful," the 38-year-old said.

Liza Ng, 一名居住在香港的公關主管，從來就沒有時間也沒有興趣擁有黝黑健康的外表。相反的，他每個月花費了數千元在面膜、洗面皂和面霜等產品來使他的肌膚更為白皙。

“我希望擁有完全白皙無瑕的肌膚，因為那會使我更美麗”這位38歲的女主管這樣說。

Ng is not alone. Women across Asia pay exorbitant prices for cosmetics that promise to whiten their skin and give them a fair, frail look, which for centuries has been considered a sign of beauty in women in China and across much of the region.

Ng 並不是唯一的一個。許許多多居住在亞洲地區的女人，付出驚人的價格在購買宣稱保證可以讓她們的肌膚更白，使她們能擁有更宛若精靈楚楚可憐外表的化妝品上，讓她們可達到幾個世紀以來中國及其他亞洲地區所謂“一白遮三醜”的經典美人形象。

In Asian countries, pale skin represented royalty or sophistication. Most royals were believed to have their pale skin from staying indoors all day as opposed to the farmers who spent their lives working in rice paddy fields under the sun.

以往在亞洲的國家當中，蒼白的肌膚代表皇室或是有教養的血統及身分。很多貴族相信因為自己長期處於室內而造成的雪白肌膚，正是他們與必須長期在太陽下耕種的農民所擁有的最大分野。

In Japan Geishas were (and still are) known for their extremely white skin, which represents beauty, grace, and high social status.

以前在日本皇室(其實現在還是)，正是以他們極端白皙的皮膚，來象徵美麗、優雅及高尚的地位。

In parts of Latin America and Africa, due to colonization, skin whitening is used to imitate the Europeans' skin color.

在部分拉丁美洲及非洲地區，由於殖民的歷史背景，皮膚白皙是當地居民用來仿效歐洲人皮膚顏色的一種方法。

Today many skin whitening products in the form of creams, pills, soaps or lotions are available. **The mechanism of whitening is usually by the breakdown of [melanin](#) by enzymes**, such as that contained in the droppings of the [Japanese bush warbler](#) or reducing agents such as [Hydroquinone](#). Most whitening creams also contain a [UV](#) block to prevent sun damage to the skin.

今天，許多美白產品以不同形式像是乳霜、口服藥丸、洗面皂或是乳液供給人們。而這些產品作用的原理通常是藉由分解由皮膚中的酵素反應所產生的麥拉寧黑色素，藉此抑制小斑點或是運用例如對苯二酚來降低黑色素產生的媒介。大部分的美白霜還有防止皮膚免於紫外線及曬傷的成分。

But the demand for skin-whitening cosmetics — which can cost as much as US\$385 (over \$12,000NTD) for a 50-ml bottle — has more than a monetary cost. Health experts say that

mercury — a potentially deadly substance that helps to keep skin white — has been found in a number of skin-whitening cosmetics.

但是，花費 12000 在一瓶 50ml 的美白乳霜上所帶來的代價不僅是財務上的損失。健康學者表示，像汞(水銀)，這種會潛在於人體中並可導致死亡的物質也有美白的效果，並且已經被發現使用在美白產品當中。

“In Hong Kong (and in Taiwan), there are no strict rules for product labelling and you can buy cream that says it is mercury-free, but when we examine it, it is full of mercury,” said Christopher Lam, a professor of chemical pathology at the Chinese University. While drugs are regulated and need to pass trials proving their efficacy and safety before they are sold, there is little governance over cosmetics here.

"There are no regulations requiring manufacturers to prove their cosmetics are effective, so you can claim anything you want," said Allen Chan, chemical pathology assistant professor at Chinese University.

“在香港還有台灣並沒有嚴苛的法律來規範各式產品的標籤，而消費者可以購買到宣稱無汞，但是當我們檢驗的時候，卻充滿汞的產品”香港中文大學的化學病變教授Christopher Lam說。當所有的藥品在上市前都需經過效果及安全性的檢測時，對於化妝保養品上卻沒有很嚴格的管制。“沒有法規來要求製造商必須在這些美白產品的實際效果上提出證明，所以製造商可以宣稱任何能夠吸引消費者購買的要素” Allen Chan，香港中文大學化學病變科副教授說。

Lam, who also works at the Prince of Wales Hospital, said there have been isolated cases of mercury poisoning seen in women who used such creams.

Lam，同時也替the Prince of Wales 醫院工作，更指出醫院當中已經有一些婦女因為使用美白霜後出現汞中毒的案例發生。

“There may also be cases going to other doctors, not exclusively us,” he added.

“應該還有一些人也有類似的情況發生，只是他們去別的地方求診了”他又加以補充。

Mercury blocks an enzyme that is required for the formation of melanin, the dark pigment in skin. But constant, **heavy exposure to mercury is dangerous**. It attacks the central nervous system and **results in brain and kidney damage**.

汞可以阻礙造成麥拉寧黑色素沉澱的酵素。但是持續使用後，汞在肌膚上的大量沉積是非常危險的。它會攻擊影響人體的中樞神經系統並造成腦部及腎臟的損傷。

Questions about the safety of cosmetics came into focus last week when Chinese regulators said they found two toxic metals, chromium and neodymium, in **nine SK-II products**, a brand owned by Procter & Gamble. Three of the products purport to whiten skin. The two metals are banned for use in cosmetics in China. Chromium is carcinogenic and can cause eczema, while neodymium, which is used in magnets, can cause eye and skin irritation.

化妝保養品的安全性議題在上星期成為焦點，當中國當局說明他們在所屬於P&G集團的九種SKII產品當中，找到兩種有毒重金屬--鉻及釹。其中有三種就是美白商品。這兩種重金屬在中國是不允許存在於化妝保養品中。鉻是致癌物而且會造成濕疹，而釹大多用於磁石製造，會刺激眼睛及皮膚。

SK-II has said it does not add chromium, neodymium or other heavy metals into its products and was very concerned about the Chinese findings.

SK-II公司已經說明，他們的化妝保養品並無添加鉻、釹甚至任何重金屬，而且對中國當局的發現表示關心及掛慮。

But it added that heavy metals exist in the environment, such as in the water and air. The company also said it would investigate if "minimal trace levels of these heavy metals may be presented in the SK-II production process."

但是它們添加了存在於環境中的重金屬，像是在水中或是空氣中的。SK-II公司還說明他們會調查”極

微量的重金屬”是否可能在他們的製造過程當中出現。

Nevertheless, **Procter & Gamble took its products off the shelves in China last Friday** (Oct. 2006) pending a probe by a Chinese health and safety watchdog to check whether its products carried possibly harmful metals.

然而，P&G集團上星期五將它在中國的產品全數下架，等候中國健康安全把關人員仔細探測它們的產品究竟是否含有損害人體的金屬。

Mercury content 汞含量

In a study of 38 skin whitening creams in 2000, Lam and his colleagues found that eight of them contained excessive mercury. One exceeded limits used in the United States by 65,000 times!

Five were made in China and three in Taiwan.

在西元2000年對38種市售美白霜的研究當中，Lam和同事發現裡面有八種含有過量的汞。一種甚至超出美國最高限制含量65000倍。而其中五種在中國製造，三種在台灣製造。

"When we did an x-ray of the offending cream, it didn't allow the x-ray to go through. It was radio-opaque," said pathologist Michael Chan at the Prince of Wales Hospital.

“當我們運用X光來檢測這些乳霜，X光甚至無法穿透它們，這些物質是無法傳導X光”Prince of Wales的病理學家Michael Chan說

The experts called on consumers to be more skeptical about cosmetic company promises to whiten their skin.

這些專家們打電話訪談消費者並且更加懷疑這些化妝品公司對顧客能夠美白肌膚的承諾。

"We do not know of any ingredient (used in cosmetics) that is effective and that has proven long-lasting effect in whitening the skin," said Lam. "There is not much that cosmetics can do, to improve (whiten) the complexion."

“我們並不知道有任何一個成分(在化妝保養品中被使用)，對美白肌膚具有相當效果並可長時間維持的”Lam這樣說。“事實上並沒有很多化妝保養品可以真正改善(美白)我們的膚色。”

They called on consumers to use brands produced in countries with strict product labelling and which have good manufacturing practices, and to buy from reliable shops.

所有被抽樣的消費者都是習慣使用販售於多國，並且在產品標示上相當清楚，製造過程也不錯的大廠牌，並在廠牌的授權販售點購買。

Governments must do their part, they said. "We should have import restrictions. Imports without good, certified labels should not be allowed in," Lam said.

政府必須負起它們的責任，這些學者這樣說。“我們必須有些進口的條例。不良成分、標示不明的產品是不能讓它們進入國內的”Lam這樣補充。

With manufactured skin-care products now under the microscope for traces of dangerous metals, women in Asia might find themselves turning to an age-old home remedy to temporarily whiten skin – yogurt, collagen (egg white) and rice powder.

在許多護膚產品於顯微鏡的檢視中，發現含有危險重金屬的情況下，亞洲的女人或許發現他們可以尋求一些古老的¹家庭療法來完成暫時性的美白，像是運用優格、膠原蛋白(蛋清)以及米磨成的粉來敷臉。

Controversy 爭論

Some people see skin whitening as an attempt of [racial transformation](#)¹. [Bobbi Brown](#) is one such person who does not believe in skin-whitening and urges young Asian teenagers to embrace their natural [skin color](#), saying that she sees skin-whitening products when she goes to [Asia](#) and "doesn't like it." 有些人認為美白肌膚其實就是一種想要轉換種族的企圖。Bobbi Brown 則是一名不迷信於美白肌膚並且鼓勵亞洲青少女接受自己自然的膚色的彩妝大師，當她前往亞洲而看到玲瑯滿目的美白商品時，她說道“我實在不喜歡”。