

**2018 Health Advisory #6:  
Elevated Levels of Mercury in Certain Skin-Lightening Creams and Medicated Soaps**

- Certain skin-lightening creams and medicated soaps purchased over the counter in New York City have been found to contain elevated levels of mercury – as high as 14,000 times the permissible limit.
- Providers should ask patients whether they use non-prescription creams or soaps to lighten their skin or for skin disorders. Advise patients against using such products.
- If a patient reports using such products, providers should consider urine testing for mercury in consultation with a medical toxicologist or the New York City Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222).

**Please distribute to all clinical staff in Complementary or Alternative Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Gastroenterology, Gynecology & Obstetrics, Internal Medicine, Occupational and Environmental Health, and Primary Care.**

March 27, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) reminds health care providers that some non-prescription skin-lightening creams and medicated soaps can contain toxic levels of inorganic mercury.



- Due Beauty Cream made by Kreative Cosmetics (Pvt) Ltd.
- Sandal Whitening Beauty Cream made by MMC Cosmetics® - Pakistan
- Chandni Whitening Cream made by SJ Enterprises Pakistan
- Golden Pearl Beauty Cream made by Golden Pearl Cosmetics
- Face Fresh Beauty Cream made by Shaheen Cosmetics Pakistan
- Faiza No 1 Beauty Cream made by A.M. Cosmetics (Pak)
- Faiza Beauty Cream made by Poonia Brothers (Pak)
- Seven Herbal Ubtan Cream made by C.P.H.L.
- Stillman's Freckle Cream and Stillman's Skin Bleach Cream made in Pakistan under license from the Stillman Company Inc., USA
- Niuma Medicated Antiseptic Soap made by Niuma Belleza, Spain
- Niuma Lemon Medicated Germicidal Soap made by Niuma Belleza, Spain

Since January 2017, DOHMH has identified 10 skin-lightening creams from Pakistan and two medicated soaps from Spain with elevated mercury levels as high as 14,000 times the permissible limit referenced by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) for mercury in cosmetics. Exposure to mercury can cause serious and life-threatening damage to the central and peripheral nervous system and kidneys. Early inorganic mercury toxicity is typically asymptomatic, but chronic exposure may lead to skin rash, paresthesia, tremors, irritability, memory loss and depression. Renal effects include proteinuria, acute tubular necrosis and nephrotic syndrome.

Health care providers should ask patients whether they use non-prescription creams or soaps to lighten their skin or for skin disorders and counsel patients against using such products. If a patient reports using such products, providers should consider urine testing for mercury. Initial testing should include a spot urine mercury

concentration followed by a 24-hour urine mercury level. Blood testing is of limited value for inorganic mercury exposure.

Resources for health care providers on mercury poisoning can be found [here](#).

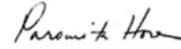
Sincerely,



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