



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH
Commissioner

**2017 Health Advisory #35
Elevated Levels of Mercury in *Faiza No. 1 Beauty Cream***

- *Faiza No. 1 Beauty Cream*, a non-prescription skin-lightening cream available for purchase in New York City, was found to contain dangerously elevated levels of mercury.
- Providers should ask patients about their use of non-prescription skin-lightening creams and advise against using mercury-containing or unlabeled cosmetic 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.

September 26, 2017

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 soaps can contain toxic levels of inorganic mercury.



In June 2017, DOHMH tested *Faiza No. 1 Beauty Cream*, a non-prescription topical product available for purchase in New York City. This product, manufactured in Pakistan by A.M. Cosmetics (Pak), claims that it “clears pimples and freckles and makes you white.” Analysis revealed that it contained extremely high levels of mercury, as high as 8,200 ppm – which greatly exceeded the 1 ppm permissible limit set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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 about their use of non-prescription, topical skin-lightening products and counsel patients against using cosmetic products that list mercury as an ingredient or that do not include a list of ingredients on the label. 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:

<http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/lead/mercury-hcp-factsht.pdf>.

Sincerely,

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