



PIGMENTATION

THE COMPLEXION CONUNDRUM IN INDIA: AN ANALYSIS OF 'BESTSELLER' SKIN LIGHTENING CREAMS.

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Background: Skin lightening creams are a multi-million dollar booming industry in India. Consumers often present to the dermatologist with adverse cutaneous reactions to skin lightening creams. The composition of these creams has not received sufficient attention.

Objective: To analyse the ingredients of 'bestseller' skin lightening creams available in the Indian market

Materials and Methods: Twenty fairness or whitening or lightening creams were selected based on the 'bestseller' creams of one of the largest electronic commerce websites in India, the presence of an ingredient label and availability in local stores. The ingredient labels were examined and constituents categorised.

Results: The number of ingredients listed in the creams ranged from 6-49 (mean-31.4). A total of 190 ingredients was listed. The most commonly listed ingredients in the creams were water/aqua, perfume/fragrance (unspecified), glycerine, tocopheryl acetate, methyl paraben, disodium ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid, niacinamide, phenoxyethanol, cetyl alcohol, titanium dioxide and ethylhexylmethoxycinnamate. The most commonly specified fragrances were linalool, alphasomethylionine, citronellol, limonene and hexylcinnamal. Twenty seven plant names were listed. The most common plants used were glycyrrhiza glabra (licorice), lemon extract, mulberry extract and almond oil. Other natural compounds included honey, diamond powder, milk lipids, milk enzymes and tourmaline (a semiprecious stone).

Conclusions: Consumers are exposed to a plethora of compounds in the quest for a lighter skin tone. Many ingredients are unsupported by scientific evidence and are potential allergens. Increased awareness of the composition of skin lightening creams available in the market and strict regulation of these creams is needed.

