

Skin bleaching: Beyond the pale?

Despite repeated warnings some Afro-Caribbean, African and Asian women continue the practice of skin bleaching.

High levels of the cancer-causing chemical hydroquinone have been found in some skin lightening creams.

There's a risk of permanent skin and blood vessel damage and even infection as many of the products used in the process contain banned prescription-only steroids and hydroquinone, a bleaching agent which is dangerous in excessive quantities.

As recently as 2007 authorities in Jamaica carried out a public awareness campaign warning of the dangers of skin bleaching.

Doctors in Jamaica have reported that apart from the more traditional skin lightening creams, some Jamaicans use toothpaste, curry powder, milk powder, household bleach and cornmeal to lighten their skin.

This issue was addressed on BBC Africa Have Your Say on June 11, produced in collaboration with BBC Caribbean

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