

FDA: anti-aging, skin-lightening products may contain mercury

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(HealthDay)—Some skin products contain mercury and pose a threat to

your health, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warns.

It's important to check labels of [skin creams](#), soaps and lotions. If "mercurous chloride," "calomel," "mercuric," "mercurio" or "[mercury](#)" is listed on the label, stop using the product immediately. Do not use products if ingredients are not listed, the agency says.

Mercury is often found in cosmetics marketed as "anti-aging" or "skin lightening" that claim to remove age spots, freckles, blemishes and wrinkles. Some teens also use the products to treat acne, according to the FDA.

Mercury-containing skin products are made in other countries and sold illegally in the United States, often in shops that cater to Hispanic, Asian, African and Middle Eastern communities. These products are also sold online, while some consumers buy them abroad and bring them back to the United States for personal use.

Mercury exposure can cause serious health problems. Pregnant women, nursing babies and young children are especially vulnerable. Mercury can damage a baby's developing brain and nervous system, and nursing mothers can pass mercury to their newborns.

"Your family might breathe mercury vapors released from these products. Your children might touch washcloths or towels that are contaminated with mercury. It could be as simple as touching someone's cheek or face," Dr. Arthur Simone, a senior medical adviser at the FDA, said in an agency news release.

Before throwing out a product that may contain mercury, seal it in a plastic bag or leak-proof container and check with your local environmental, health or solid waste agency for disposal instructions, the FDA said.

More information: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has more on [mercury](#).

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