

All shades are worthy:

Connecting colorism, skin lightening products, and your health



What I will **learn**:

How skin lightening products can be bad for my health

How to read and understand the labels on skin lightening products

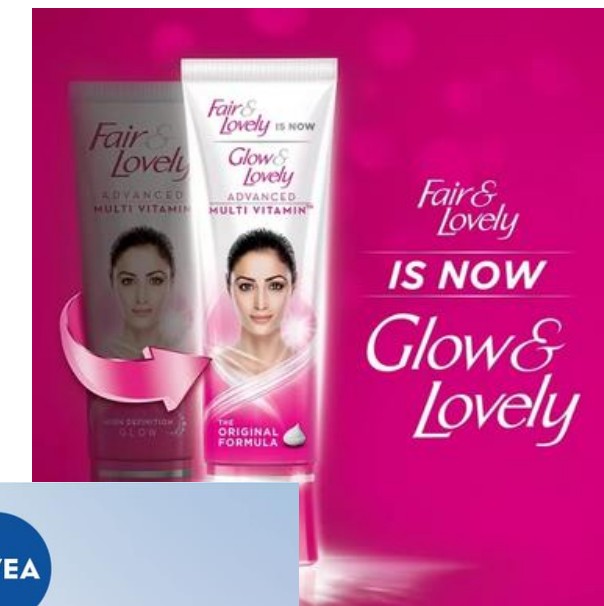
What is colorism

How factors like colorism can affect how I and others think about beauty

How the use of skin lightening products is an environmental justice issue

Skin lightening products come in many forms

- Creams, lotions, soaps, pads, or injectables
- Sometimes labeled as “bleaching,” “evening,” “correcting,” “blemish-fading,” or other names



Skin lightening products are sources of potentially **toxic chemicals**

Skin lightening products on your **body** means **toxic chemicals** in your body

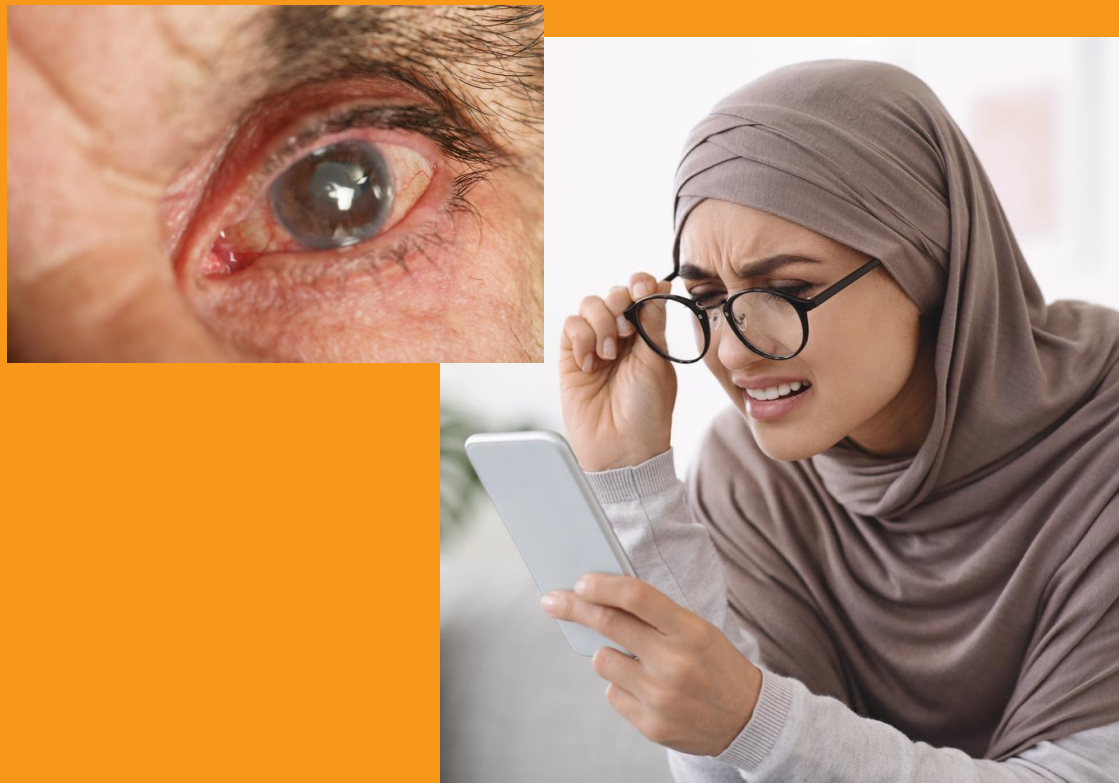
Your baby is also exposed to **toxic chemicals** when you use skin lightening products



HYDROQUINONE in skin lightening products is **DANGEROUS**

HYDROQUINONE can cause these health problems:

**Blurry vision &
other eye damage**



**Skin discoloration and rash -
Ochronosis**



Skin cancer



HYDROQUINONE from your doctor is **SAFE**

Hydroquinone is **SAFE** to use in products
from your doctor



Source: [BCPP Safe Campaign for Cosmetics](#); [FDA Skin Facts](#)

Hydroquinone is **not SAFE**
in products you buy
yourself



MERCURY in skin lightening products is **DANGEROUS**

MERCURY in skin lightening products can cause these health problems:

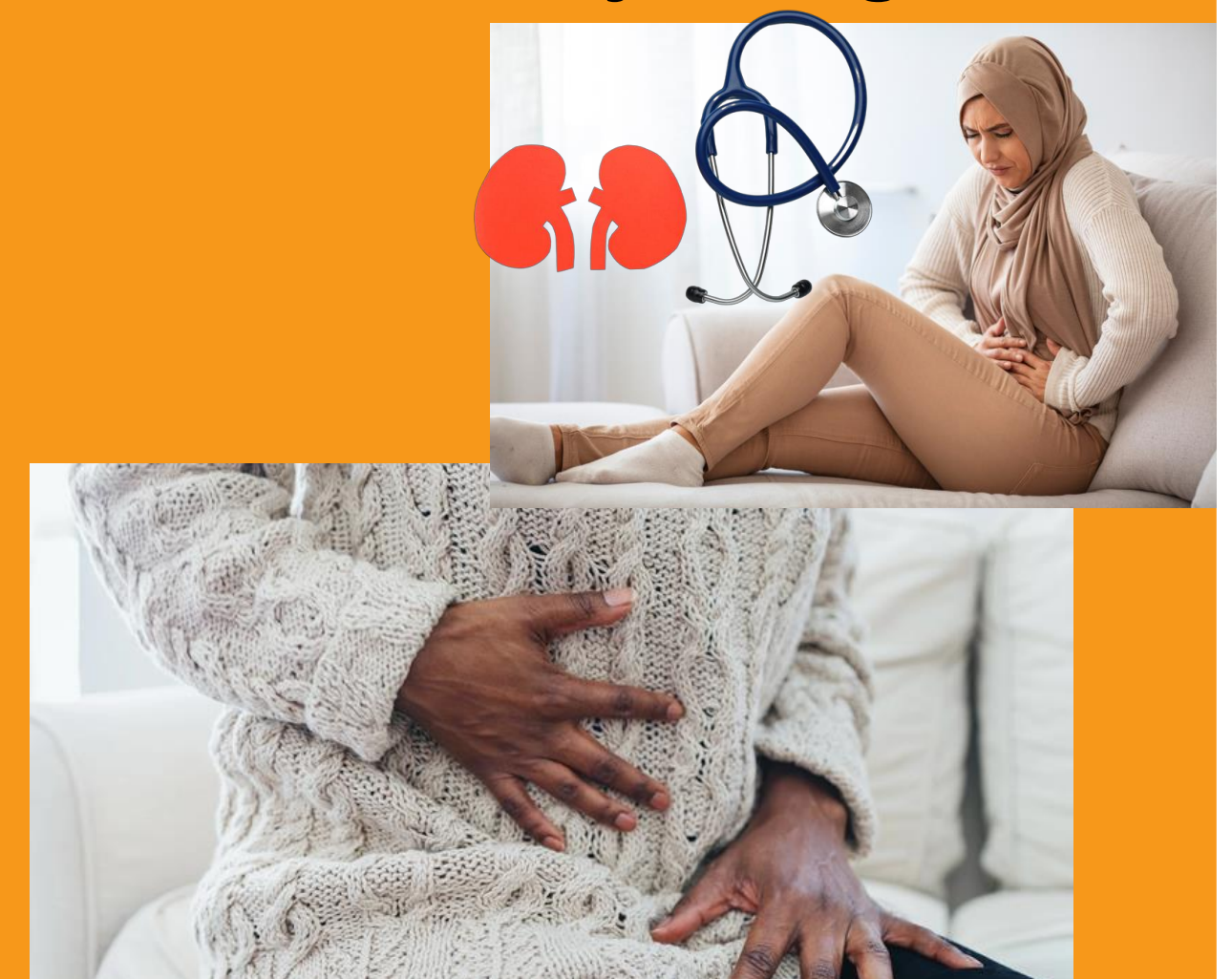
Headaches, memory loss & other nervous system damage



Skin discoloration & scarring



Kidney damage

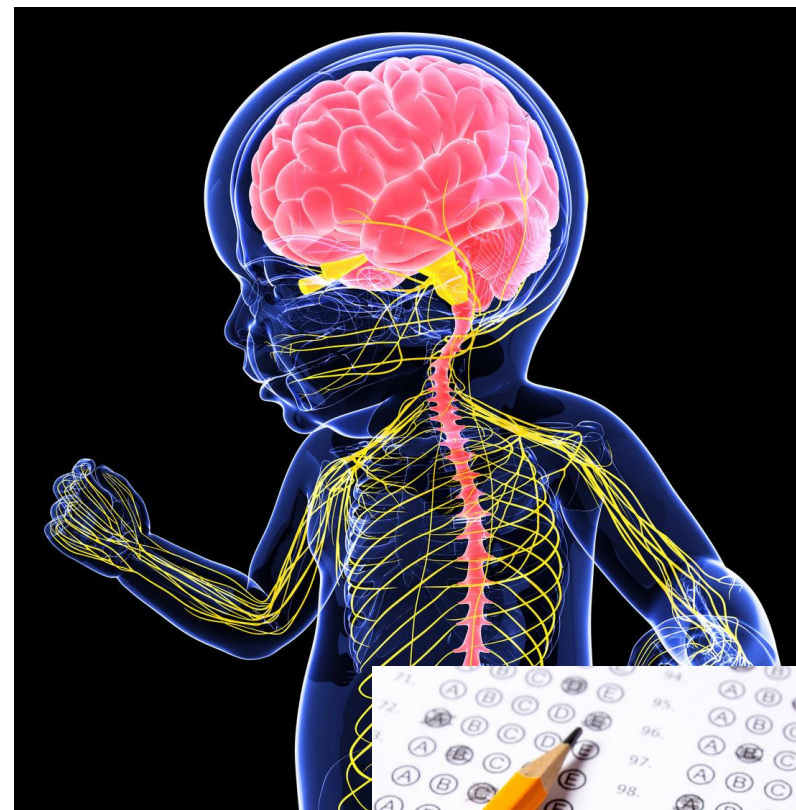


Your kids can be exposed to **MERCURY** in skin lightening products, too

Mercury can damage your child's nervous system and can cause learning and memory problems



U.S. government and state of NY have **BANNED** mercury in skin lightening products



STERIODS in skin lightening products are **DANGEROUS**

STERIODS in skin lightening products can cause these health problems:

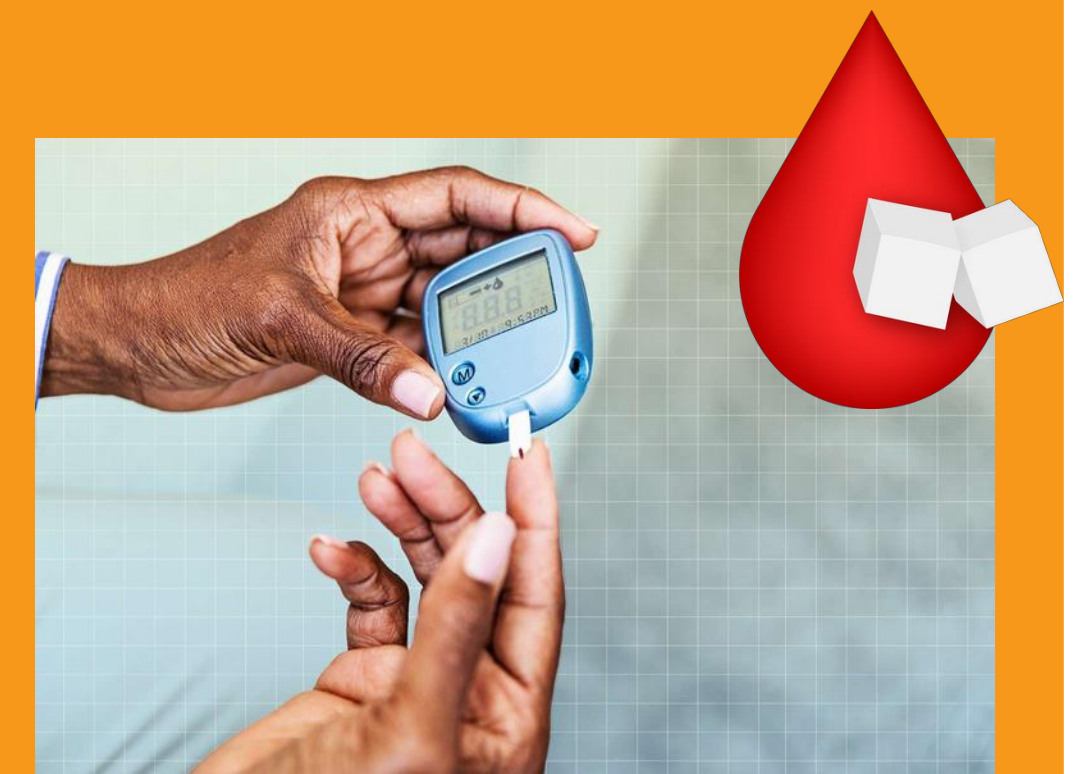
High blood pressure,
leading to heart
problems



Skin damage, acne, and painful
skin sores



High blood sugar,
leading to diabetes



How to avoid potentially toxic skin lightening products while shopping?



Tips for when you shop



Read the labels of your products



Try to **avoid** products with some of the most toxic chemicals

AVOID
products with
these
chemicals
listed on them

1. MERCURY

2. HYDROQUINONE

3. STERIODS

Read your labels



Some products won't have **MERCURY** listed on the label, but other names for **MERCURY**

1.MERCURY

AVOID products
with these
chemicals

Other names:

Hg

Mercuric iodide

Mercuric chloride

Mercurous chloride

Ammoniated mercury

Calomel

Mercurio

Amide chloride of mercury or mercury oxide

Read your labels



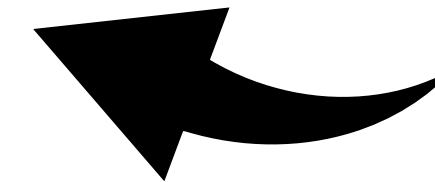
Some products won't have mercury listed on the label, but these instructions are a sign of **MERCURY**

Read your labels

**Signs of
products with
MERCURY**

AVOIDS PRODUCTS that tell
you avoid contact with silver,
gold, rubber, aluminum and
jewelry

Products with mercury will
ruin your jewelry



Tips for when you shop

Read your labels



LOOK OUT for products with different names but similar promises

These products might also expose you to **HYDROQUINONE, MERCURY, or STERIODS** which are **DANGEROUS**

Tips for when you shop

Be skeptical of products with:



Missing product label?

**Handmade product label
or label with handwriting
on it?**

These products may not have ingredient information listed, so you can't do a proper **label check**



HOME

WHO
WE
ARE

WHAT
WE DO

GET
INVOLVED

LATEST

VOTE

JUSTICE40RV

New York state has **BANNED**
the sale of **cosmetics and**
personal care products
containing mercury

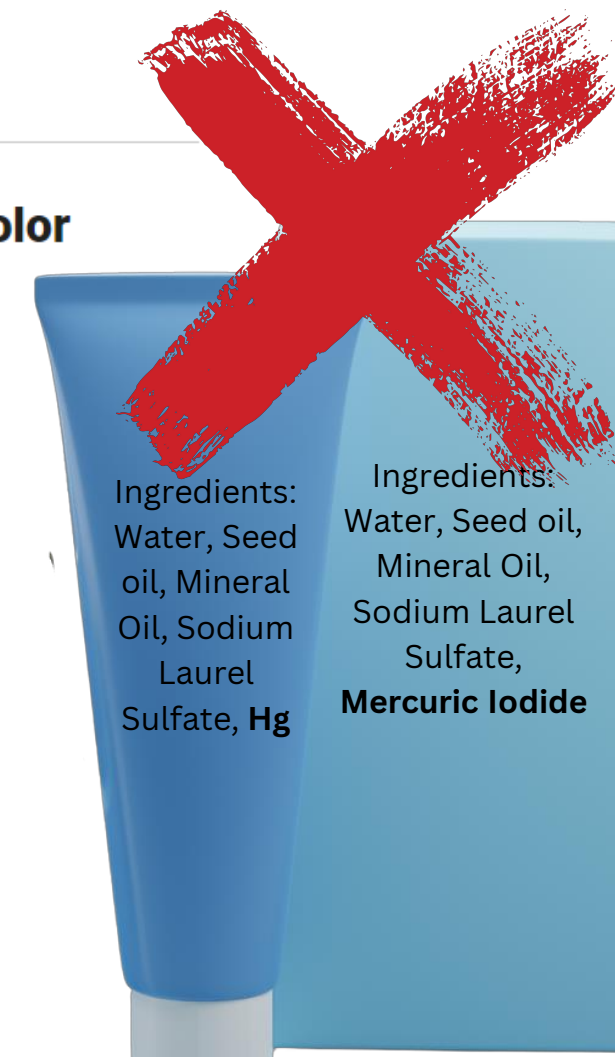
Governor Hochul Bans Sale of Personal Care Products Containing Mercury

Mercury is a Neurotoxin Used in Skin Lightening Creams Marketed to People of Color

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 23, 2022

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IRB Approval Date: 04/18/2024
For use until modified or study is closed



Your zip code matters when shopping for products

Where you live can affect your ability to find products that are not toxic



Your zip code matters when shopping for products

WE ACT staff visited stores in **Northern Manhattan** and found that **local salons and small beauty stores commonly sold toxic products**



Environmental racism in the beauty industry

Fighting environmental racism in the beauty industry is similar to the fight for **climate justice**, **housing justice**, and **language justice**



People of color deserve to have ACCESS to clean air, affordable housing, healthcare, and safe personal care products



Products with toxic chemicals in them, like skin lighteners, are disproportionately marketed and used by women of color

That is NOT justice

Environmental racism in the beauty industry

What does beauty look like?



22 years of covers!

Your Ultimate Skincare Routine For A Picture-Perfect Wedding

Written by **Karen Alfonso**

Posted on Feb 26, 2024, 17:20 IST



FOLLOW ON



By: Dr Kiran MD, Author Skin Sense and Founder Isya Aesthetics

Source: [Femina](#)

Hydration Is Key



The key to achieving glowing skin for your destination wedding is hydration. Work on hydrating your body from within – lots of water through the day. Incorporate a hydrating serum containing ingredients like hyaluronic acid to keep your skin plump and supple. Don't forget to moisturize your skin, especially if you're in a dry climate.

Lip Care



Don't forget to care for your lips, especially if you're in a dry climate. Use a lip balm with SPF during the day and a hydrating lip mask at night to keep your lips soft and smooth.

Cleanse Well

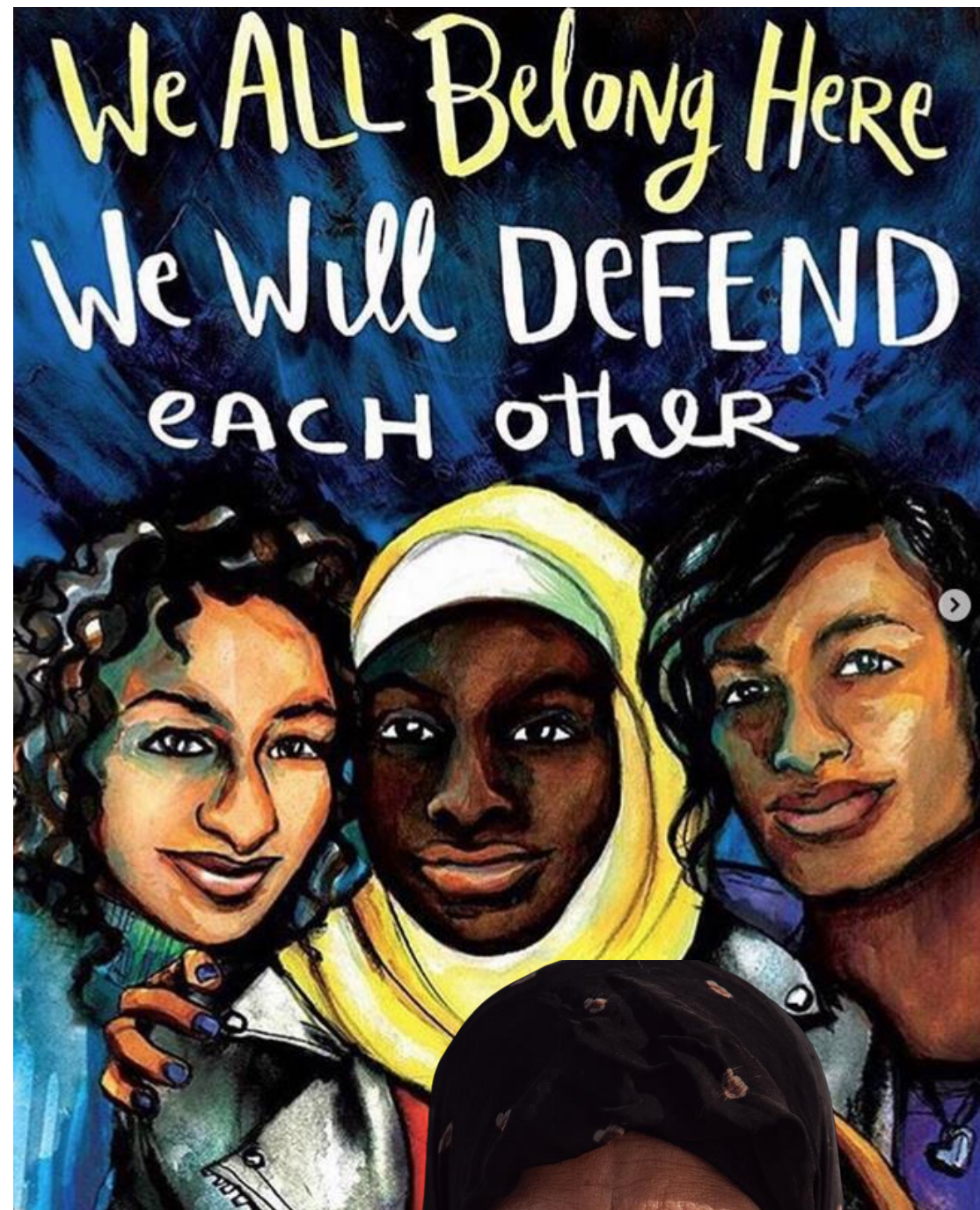


A gentle cleanser is essential for maintaining clear and healthy skin. Use a cleanser suited to your skin type to remove impurities without stripping your skin of its natural oils. End the day with cleaning off all the make-up and dirt from the day, regardless of how long the day has been, and how tired you may be.

Pre-Wedding Facials



Treat yourself to a series of pre-wedding facials to pamper your skin and address any specific concerns. Opt for hydrating and brightening facials to achieve a radiant complexion for your big day.



Historically, we have been taught that beauty only looks a certain way

BEAUTY is diverse



Racism has glorified certain beauty features, like light and fair skin

Skin lightening products are marketed as the answer



Skin lightening products can be **dangerous** to your health and your child's health



**Skin lightening products
are marketed as the
answer**



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Colorism affects a lot of us

- Colorism is discrimination based on skin color
- Colorism is the belief that light or fairer skin is better and people with it have more attractive features and qualities



Source: [Norwood 2015](#)

Colorism affects a lot us



"The marriage market always demands a fair bride." -
Bangladeshi matchmaker,
Ghatak Pakhi Bhai



Women of color in Northern Manhattan
and South Bronx in a survey said:

LIGHT SKIN makes a woman
look more **beautiful**

LIGHT SKIN makes a woman
look **younger**



SHADY
11-1106
Indian jackpot!



SHADY
11-3290
Almost foreigner #Blessed



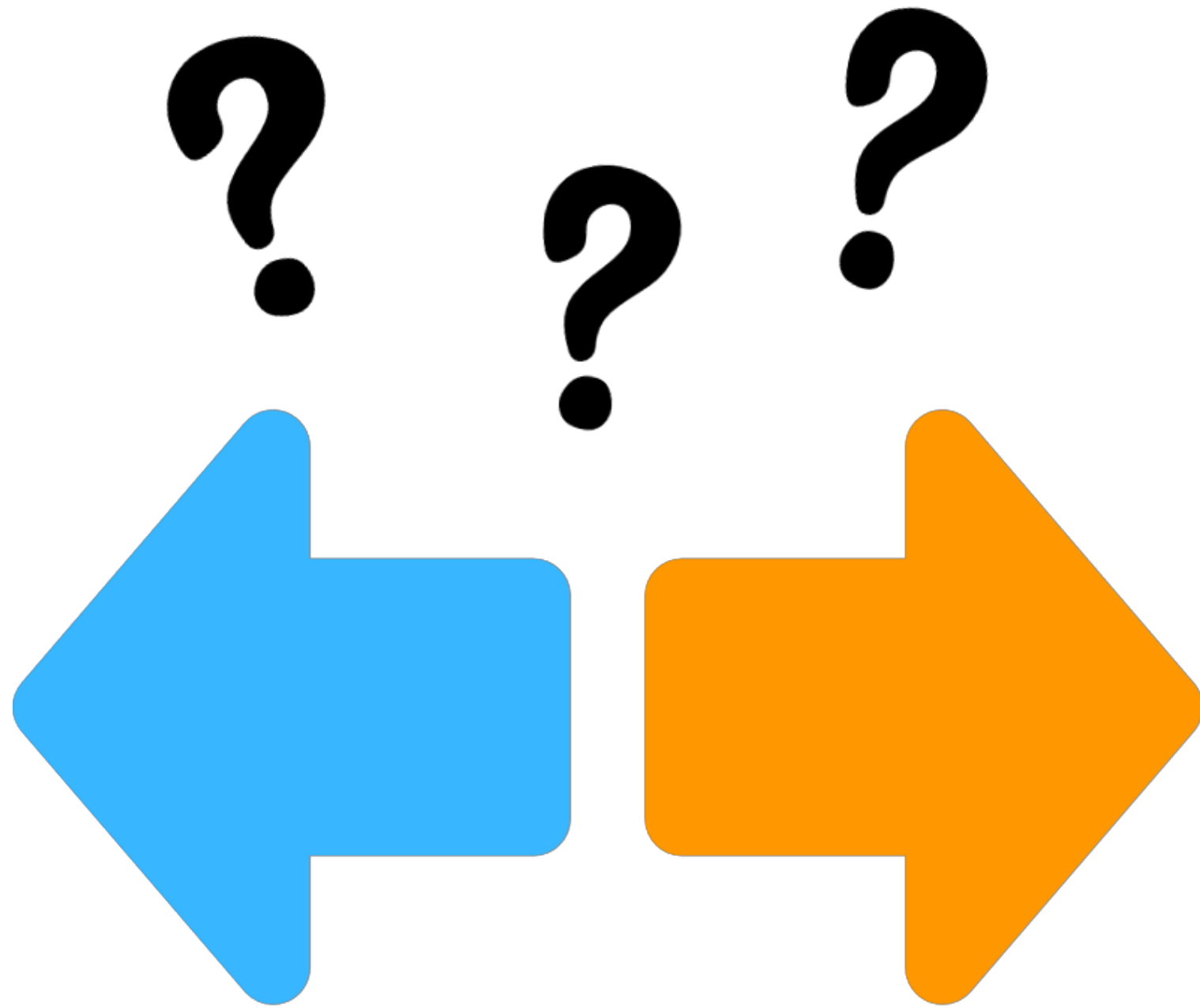
SHADY
17-3452
"Beautiful for a dark girl."



SHADY
17-8237
"Just try some treatment."

What can you do?

Hard conversations with yourself and others



- Balancing societal pressures, personal agency, and potential harm
- Figuring out the right decision for you is **personal** and can be **difficult**

Words matter

Don't drink so much tea, it will make you dark

Don't stay out in the sun too long

- Choose your words carefully when talking to others – *especially when you are commenting on someone's skin*
- We often say words or phrases that perpetuate the idea that fair or light skin is favorable

Focus on areas where you can take **ACTION**

READ



**AVOID products with
MERCURY, HYDROQUINONE,
and/or STERIODS listed on the
label**

YOUR

MERCURY might not be on
the label, but look for its
other names

LABELS

MERCURY might not be on
the label, but if the product
says to avoid contact with
jewelry, then that's a sign
there's **MERCURY**



Focus on areas where you can take **ACTION**

READ



Different names, same products

Look out for other names for skin lightening products

YOUR



Be skeptical of products with NO product label or handwriting on the label

LABELS

Use these tips to check the products you currently have at home

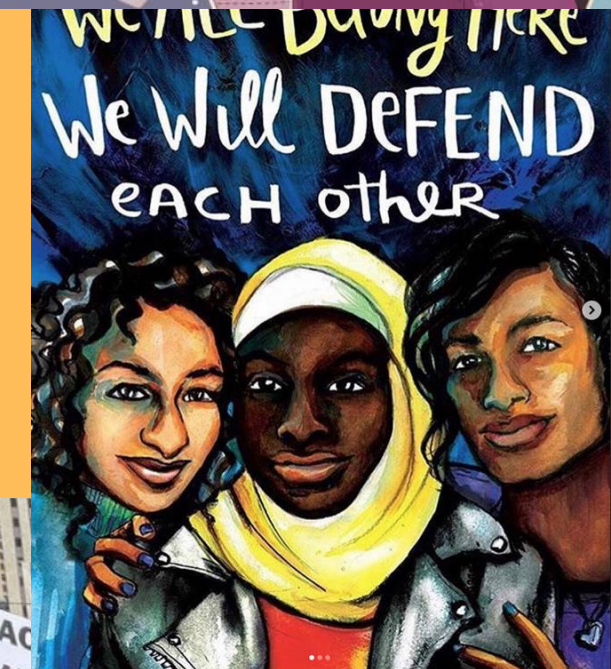


Focus on areas where you can take **ACTION**

People of color deserve to have **ACCESS** to non-toxic or non dangerous personal care products. People of color deserve to thrive and feel beautiful in every skin tone.

Racism tries to make us believe that only fair skin is beautiful and creates pressure to use dangerous skin lightening products - **BEAUTY** is diverse

Small changes can begin with sharing what you learned with others



Focus on areas where you can take ACTION

- The **higher use of skin lightening products among women and people of color** can be linked to **colorism** and the glorification of **Eurocentric beauty standard**
- **Small changes** can start with **education and conversation**
 - Share what you have learned with someone else who could benefit from this information
- Join WE ACT's Beauty Inside Out Working Group

Resources

- FDA Skin Facts! – www.fda.gov/SkinFacts
- NYC Health Hazardous Products: Mercury in Soaps and Creams – <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/mercury-in-soaps-and-creams.page>
- The Beautywell Project
 - Information about products – www.thebeautywell.org/data/database/
 - Informational videos and materials – www.thebeautywell.org/data/knowledge-hub/