

**Press Conference**  
**Mercury Contamination in Whitening Cream**

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By Ecological Alert and Recovery – Thailand (EARTH)  
and Foundation for Consumers (FFC)

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at Foundation for Consumers

**Why Whitening Cream?**

Today, more people are paying attention to skin care. Many believe that light skin will contribute to success in life and career, thus the growing popularity of whitening cream. A study by Beiersdorf (Thailand) of Thai facial lotion products found whitening cream to have as much as 60% market share, with an approximate value of 2.1 billion baht (70 million US dollars).

## Regulations on Mercury (Thailand)

Ministry of Health, 2009 Notice on Prohibited Ingredients in Cosmetic Manufacturing:  
 “Mercury and mercury compounds are prohibited in the manufacturing of cosmetics”

## Regulations on Mercury (International)

Country/Organization	Regulations on Mercury in Products
European Union	Prohibited Ingredient in Cosmetics
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)	Prohibited Ingredient in Cosmetics
Thailand: Food and Drug Administration	Prohibited Ingredient in Cosmetics
United States: Food and Drug Administration	Less than 1 ppm
The Phillipines: Food and Drug Administration	No more than 1 ppm

ที่มา: ดัดแปลงจากเอกสารปรอทในครีมหน้าขาวขององค์การอนามัยโลก, 2011

## Mercury in Whitening Cream

- Mercury is a popular ingredient in whitening cream due to its ability to suppress the production of melanin, causing skin color to lighten.
- Danger from skin exposure to mercury: skin rashes, thinner and darker skin. Long-term exposure can cause accumulative toxicity. Mercury can be absorbed into bloodstream, causing infections of liver, kidney and bladder, as well as anemia. Mercury can be passed on from mother to child during pregnancy.



Mercury Poisoning from Whitening Cream

Source: VH1.com, television show The Price of Beauty aired on MTV station

## Sample Survey

1. Selection criteria for whitening cream

Advertises ability to produce white, light, bouncing skin  
and ability to erase blemishes

2. Selection criteria for purchasing locations

- Department stores, shops, and street vendors
- 8 provinces in North, Northeast, Central and Southern Thailand

3. Time of sample survey: April-May 2012

4. Laboratory analysis at private laboratory according to ASEAN standards

## Findings

- High levels of mercury contamination
- Undetected mercury does not mean safe
- Expensive does not mean safe
- Incomplete labeling

## Mercury Contamination in Whitening Cream (1)

### Samples

- 47 samples total
- Produced in Thailand and abroad
- 15 samples purchased in Bangkok
- 32 samples purchased in other provinces  
(Nonthaburi, Surat Thani, Payao, Songkhla, Samut Prakarn, Kalasin and Khon Kaen)
- Varied prices



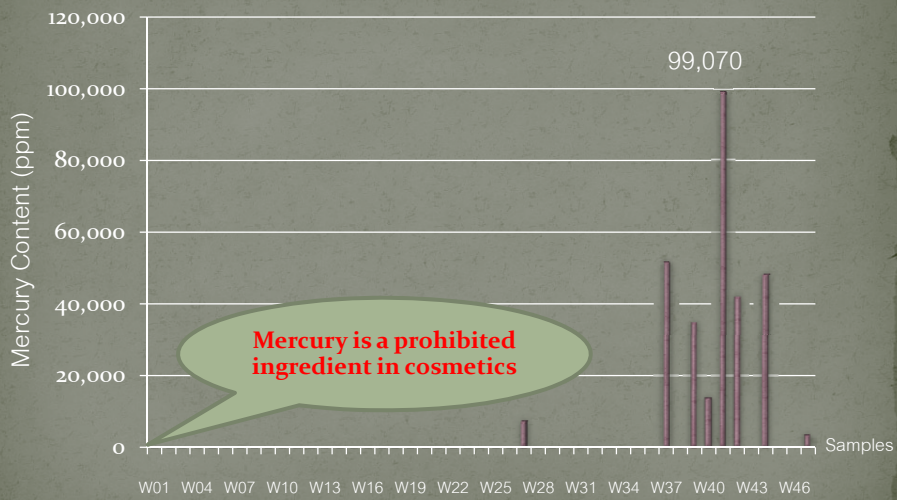
Whitening Creams in Sample Survey

## Mercury Contamination in Whitening Cream (2)


- One in 5 samples (10 out of 47) have high mercury content
- Of the 10 contaminated samples, mercury content ranged from 63.53 to 99,070 ppm

*Mercury as a prohibited ingredient in cosmetics (Thai FDA)*

## Mercury Contamination in Whitening Cream





## Whitening Cream Contaminated with Mercury

Product Name	FC Rice Milk Cream (W41)	
Mercury Content	99,070 ppm	
Size	5 g	
Selling Price	40 baht	
Location of Purchase	Surat Thani	
Manufacturer	Unidentified	

	Product Name	White Rose Cream (W37)
	Mercury Content	51,600 ppm
	Size	6 g
	Selling Price	189 baht
	Location of Purchase	Songkhla
	Manufacturer	Tanapat Cosmetics, Co. Ltd.


## Whitening Cream Contaminated with Mercury (cont'd)

Product Name	Biocollagen (W44)	
Mercury Content	47,960 ppm	
Size	6 g	
Selling Price	170 baht	
Location of Purchase	Kalasin	
Manufacturer	Bio Inter Co. Ltd.	


	Product Name	Meiyong (W42)
	Mercury Content	41,770 ppm
	Size	5 g
	Selling Price	57 baht
	Location of Purchase	Songkhla
	Manufacturer	Unidentified


## Whitening Cream Contaminated with Mercury (cont'd)

Product Name	Best Beauty (W39)	
Mercury Content	34,430 ppm	
Size	5 g	
Selling Price	80 baht	
Location of Purchase	Samut Prakarn	
Manufacturer	Unidentified	

	Product Name	Pearl Bouncing Face Cream (W40)
	Mercury Content	13,800 ppm
	Size	5 g
	Selling Price	20 baht
	Location of Purchase	Songkhla
	Manufacturer	C&R Cosmetics Co. Ltd.


## Whitening Cream Contaminated with Mercury (cont'd)


Product Name	Nature (W27)	
Mercury Content	7,300 ppm	
Size	10 g	
Selling Price	300 baht	
Location of Purchase	Nonthaburi	
Manufacturer	Unidentified	

	Product Name	Madame Organic Pearl (W47)
	Mercury Content	3,435 ppm
	Size	5 g
	Selling Price	150 baht
	Location of Purchase	Nonthaburi
	Manufacturer	Madame Organic (Thailand) Co.,Ltd.



## Whitening Cream Contaminated with Mercury (cont'd)

Product Name	Babyface (W32)	
Mercury Content	81.14 ppm	
Size	5 g	
Selling Price	40 baht	
Location of Purchase	Internet	
Manufacturer	Unidentified	

	Product Name	Mahaad (W35)
	Mercury Content	63.53 ppm
	Size	15 g
	Selling Price	390 baht
	Location of Purchase	Surat Thani
	Manufacturer	Unidentified

## Undetected ≠ Zero Mercury

การ์นิเย่ (Garnier)	เบต้า สูตรกลางวัน (BETA)	กิฟฟารีน (Giffarine)
นีเวีย สูตรกลางวัน (NIVEA)	คาซาโนวี (CASANOVI)	บ้านชมนก (BANCHOMNOK)
นีเวีย สูตรกลางวัน (NIVEA)	นิวโทรเจิน่า (Neutrogena)	ดอกเตอร์มนตรี (Dr. Montri)
พอนด์ส์ (POND'S)	จัสท์เพิร์ล (Just Pearl)	ดิออร์ สโนว์ (Dior Snow)
ลอรีอัล (L'Oreal)	สมูท อี (Smooth E)	ยูร่า (YURA)
โอลีย์ (Olay)	นีเวีย สำหรับผู้ชาย (NIVEA for MEN)	สกินฟู้ด (Skin Food)
ไวท์โคด (White Code)	วาสลีน (Vaseline)	ไบโอเอสพีเอฟ 50 (Bio SPF 50)
เซรามีน (Ceramine)	การ์นิเย่ สำหรับผู้ชาย (GARNIER)	ไบโอไวท์เทนนิ่ง (Bio Whitening)
สกาแคร์ (Scacare)	บูทส์ ลูมิเนส (Luminese)	เดอร์มิส (DERMIST)
นีเวีย (NIVEA)	บูทส์ (Boots)	วานไทย (Wanthai)
เกสส์ (BHAESAJ)	เคเอ (KA)	ซันทรี (SUN Tree)
เบต้า สูตรกลางวัน (BETA)	มิสทีน (Mistine)	กวนอิม (Kuan-Im)
สุภากรณ์ (Supaporn)		

## Expensive $\neq$ Safe

Some expensive brands of whitening cream have high mercury content.  
Some cheap brands of whitening cream have low mercury content.

Madame: 30 baht/gram, Mercury Contamination 3,435 ppm  
Bhaesaj: 0.40 baht/gram, Mercury Contamination less than 0.05 ppm

## Incomplete Labeling (1)

- 2011 Notice on Cosmetic Labels by Thai FDA, effective September 14, 2011 requires at least 11 items on labels:

- |                                     |                               |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) Name of Cosmetic and Trade Name  | 6) Net weight                 |
| 2) Type of Cosmetic                 | 7) Lot number                 |
| 3) Cosmetic ingredients             | 8) Manufacturing date         |
| 4) Instructions for use             | 9) Expiration date            |
| 5) Name and address of manufacturer | 10) Warning of health hazards |
|                                     | 11) Notification number       |

## Incomplete Labeling (2)

“Notification Number” means cosmetic manufacturer or vendor has notified Thai FDA, and is traceable

10 Samples with Mercury Contamination, No notification number

More than half of all sampled products, or 29 samples, have no notification number

## Conclusion (1)

- Many whitening creams on the Thai market are contaminated with mercury, which is dangerous to consumer health and is illegal
- Many whitening creams on the Thai market have incomplete and illegal labels. Specifically, they lack the “notification number,” an important piece of information for investigating illegal products

## Conclusion (2)

- More law enforcement and regulation of manufacturers is necessary from relevant agencies
- Consumers should be aware about the danger of products contaminated with heavy metals, particularly whitening cream. Alert relevant agencies upon finding incomplete labels.