



Press Release

1 in 5 Whitening Cream Tainted with Mercury Illegal Products Still Widely Available

August 16, 2012 (Bangkok) – One in five of whitening creams sold on the Thai market are contaminated with mercury, according to a sample survey of 47 products in Bangkok and many provinces across Thailand, by the Study of Mercury Contamination in Whitening Cream by Ecological Alert and Recovery – Thailand (EARTH) and the Foundation for Consumers' Smart Buy Magazine.

Jutamas Sappradit, researcher at EARTH, revealed that an analysis of 47 product samples found 10 whitening creams with high levels of mercury contamination. The highest level detected was 99,070 parts per million (ppm) of mercury. By law, cosmetics must contain 0 ppm of mercury, a prohibited ingredient in cosmetics according to safety standards by the Thai Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Ministry of Public Health and cosmetic manufacturing standards of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The product survey also found that all mercury-contaminated whitening creams displayed incomplete labeling, according to the 2011 Notice on Cosmetic Labels by the FDA's Cosmetic Committee. All contaminated products failed to display the notification number. Products without a notification number do not exist in the FDA's database, making it difficult for tracing the manufacturer in the case of contaminated products or consumer complaints.

Mercury is an illegal ingredient often used in whitening cream due to mercury's ability to suppress the production of melanin, causing skin to lighten in color. Mercury is a heavy metal that can accumulate in the human body, making it a toxic substance even in small amounts. Users of mercury-contaminated creams will develop thinner skin, increased sensitivity to light, a higher vulnerability to rashes, or may develop areas of black skin. Some people develop abnormally fast heart rates from mercury contamination. Contact with mercury over a long period of time will cause the human body to absorb mercury into the bloodstream, resulting in infection of the liver, kidney and bladder, as well as anemia. High amounts of mercury will destroy the nervous system and brain function. Mercury can also be transferred from mother to child during pregnancy. The Ministry of Public Health first declared mercury a prohibited ingredient in cosmetics in 1989, and again in the latest revision of laws in 2008.

Of the whitening creams found to be tainted with mercury, most were products that the FDA has detected mercury contamination in the past and declared to be illegal and dangerous products. However, this sample survey found that such illegal products continue to be sold on the market, namely, FC Rice Milk Cream (99,070 ppm of mercury contamination), White Rose Sheep Placenta Cream (51,600 ppm), Meuy Yong Seaweed Herbal Cream (41,770 ppm), Best Beauty (34,430 ppm), Pearl Bouncing Face Cream (13,800 ppm), Madame Organic Pearl (3,435 ppm) and Babyface Whitening Cream (81.14 ppm). In addition, the sample survey found a number of whitening creams that are contaminated with mercury but do not exist in the FDA's list of dangerous products, namely, Biocollagen (47,960 ppm), Nature (7,300 ppm) and Mahaad Moisturizing Cream (63.53 ppm).



Whitening cream is a widely-used cosmetic product with increasing popularity. According to a market analysis by Beiersdorf (Thailand) released in July 2004, whitening cream has a 60 per cent market share, with an approximate value of 2.1 billion baht (70 million US dollars), of all facial lotion products in Thailand.

In addition to finding high levels of mercury contamination, this sample survey also found that mercury contamination exists in both cheap and expensive whitening cream. As a result, consumers are not able to easily determine which products are safe from toxic heavy metal contamination.

Manufacturers and vendors of dangerous cosmetic products is a violation of the 1992 Cosmetic Act, facing maximum punishment of 1 year imprisonment or a fine of 60,000 baht (2,000 US dollars) or both.

In Thailand, cosmetics can be sold without FDA approval. "There is no guarantee that cosmetics on the market are safe," said Tassanee Naen-udon, Editor-in-Chief of Smart Buy Magazine by the Foundation for Consumers. She emphasized the importance of complete labeling, particularly the notification number, which enables the FDA to identify manufacturers of unsafe products.

"Cosmetics on the market are changing faster than the government can follow," said Sirinna Petcharat, a consumer advocate of the Creative Consumer Project in Surat Thani province. "Most consumers are under the misconception that all cosmetics sold on the market have been inspected. In fact, most cosmetic products on the market have incomplete labels and many are illegal and dangerous products."

Laboratory Analysis of Mercury Content in Whitening Cream
Sample Survey of 47 Products in 8 Provinces across Thailand

Code	Product Name	Mercury Content (ppm)	Price (baht)	Size	Purchase Location
W41	FC Rice Milk	99,070	40	5 g.	Surat Thani
W37	White Rose	51,600	189	6 g.	Songkhla
W44	Biocollagen	47,960	170	6 g.	Kalasin
W42	Muey Yong	41,770	57	5 g.	Songkhla
W39	Best Beauty	34,430	80	5 g.	Samut Prakarn
W40	Pearl Bouncing	13,800	20	5 g.	Songkhla



Code	Product Name	Mercury Content (ppm)	Price (baht)	Size	Purchase Location
	Face				
W27	Nature	7,300	300	10 g.	Nonthaburi
W47	Madame	3,435	150	5 g.	Nonthaburi
W32	Babyface	81.14	40	5 g.	Internet
W35	Mahaad Moisturizing Cream	63.53	390	15 g.	Surat Thani
W01	Garnier	<0.05*	179	50 ml	Bangkok
W02	Nivea Day Cream	<0.05*	245	50 ml	Bangkok
W03	Nivea Night Cream	<0.05*	245	50 ml	Bangkok
W04	Ponds	<0.05*	229	50 g	Bangkok
W05	L'Oréal	<0.05*	249	50 ml	Bangkok
W06	Olay	<0.05*	189	50 g	Bangkok
W07	White Code	<0.05*	225	50 g	Bangkok

* Products either with no mercury content or less than 0.05 ppm of mercury.

Due to current technological limitations, it is unable to detect mercury if the product contains less than 0.05 ppm.



Code	Product Name	Mercury Content (ppm)	Price (baht)	Size	Purchase Location
W08	Ceramine	<0.05*	125	40 g	Bangkok
W09	Scarcare	<0.05*	145	30 g	Bangkok
W10	Nivea	<0.05*	125	100 g.	Bangkok
W11	Bhaesaj	<0.05*	29	70 ml	Bangkok
W12	Beta Day Cream	<0.05*	25	5 g.	Bangkok
W13	Beta Night Cream	<0.05*	25	2.5g.	Bangkok
W14	Casanovy	<0.05*	250	20 ml.	Nonthaburi
W15	Neutrogena	<0.05*	549	50 g.	Nonthaburi
W16	Just Pearl	<0.05*	275	10 g.	Nonthaburi
W17	Smooth E	<0.05*	265	1 fl. oz.	Nonthaburi
W18	Nivea for Men	<0.05*	192.75	40 ml.	Nonthaburi
W19	Vaseline	<0.05*	199	40 g.	Nonthaburi
W20	Garnier for Men	<0.05*	179	40 ml.	Nonthaburi
W21	Boots Luminese	<0.05*	189	45 ml.	Nonthaburi



Code	Product Name	Mercury Content (ppm)	Price (baht)	Size	Purchase Location
W22	Boots	<0.05*	350	50 ml.	Nonthaburi
W23	KA	<0.05*	135	45 g.	Nonthaburi
W24	Mistine	<0.05*	69	30 g.	Nonthaburi
W25	Giffarine	<0.05*	156	40 g.	Nonthaburi
W26	Baan Chom Nok	<0.05*	39	20 g.	Nonthaburi
W28	Dr. Montri	<0.05*	39	20 g.	Nonthaburi
W29	Dior Snow	<0.05*	100	60 ml.	Nonthaburi
W30	Yura	<0.05*	320	30 g.	Nonthaburi
W31	Skin Food	<0.05*	100	50 g.	Nonthaburi
W33	Kuan Im	<0.05*	15	3 g.	Bangkok
W34	Supaporn	<0.05*	65	15 g.	Bangkok
W36	Waan Thai	<0.05*	190	20 g.	Payao
W38	Dermist	<0.05*	325	30 g.	Payao
W43	Suntree	<0.05*	139	20 g.	Payao
W45	Biowhitening	<0.05*	170	6 g.	Kalasin
W46	Bio SPF 50	<0.05*	170	6 g.	Kalasin

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