

Fair Play

Everyone seems to be gripped with the idea of looking fairer. **Nimisha Tiwari** finds out what the big deal is about whitening creams

Asia is considered the biggest market for beauty products. And whitening creams are the product of choice. Thanks to our fixation with fairer skin rather than healthy flawless skin. Men and women are both going in for lighter tones. *BT* asked skin experts if there's truly any magic bottled in those whitening vials.

IT WORKS

Dr Jamuna Pai says, "All whitening creams work by inhibiting Tyrosinase that is required for the production of melanin, which gives colour to Asian skin tones. The active ingredients that are present in these creams can be simple 'berry extracts' to chemicals like hydroquinone."

A COMBINATION OF EXFOLIANTS AND SUNSCREEN

Cosmetologist Dr Mohan Thomas says that companies that manufacture over-the-counter facial creams often package the products with a promise of skin whitening that can be achieved by continuous use. While they boast of ingredients such as exotic metals, minerals and plant extracts, the only approved ingredients that has shown whitening effects on Asian skin are 'Hydroquinone' in two per cent and four per cent creams, Arbutin and Kojic acid, which are plant extracts, Alpha

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TAKE CARE: Don't get obsessive about whitening creams

Hydroxy acids like Lactic and Glycolic acids and Vitamins C and A. Hydroquinone, Arbutin and Kojic acid reduce 'melanin', the pigment produced by melanocytes, which gives colour to the skin while other substances exfoliate the skin thus replacing the older skin cells and darker pigment with new cells having less pigment. Hence the combined use of exfoliators and depigmenting agents along with use of a sun screen is

required for skin whitening. Combination of therapies using creams, chemical peels and lasers for resurfacing (not all lasers are effective on Asian skin) are usually needed for blemish-free skin whitening.

WHITENING IS NOT BLEACHING

Dr Sunita More, cosmetologist says that it is true that whitening creams can help to some extent to brighten the skin tone. Making that part one or two shades fairer. For the best results, consistent and regular applications for at least two or three months is necessary.

BE AWARE

Many dermatologists feel that sup-

pressing the production of melanin can have adverse long-term effects. Cosmetic products only polish the skin superficially. What is important is to keep skin healthy and clean. Any tone is beautiful, whatever the shade. Why else would Westerners vie for Asian skin tone and go for bronzers and sun-tanned look?