



Queen Elizabeth I used Venetian ceruse (lead) for skin-whitening



Mercury was found in face creams in the 20th century

DEADLY BEAUTY Toxins People Used to Look "Perfect"

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History is full of strange, sometimes shocking beauty practices. From poisonous powders to radioactive creams, people have gone to extreme lengths to achieve society's ideals of attractiveness. Today, regulations and science protect consumers from most toxic cosmetics, but the lessons of the past remain striking: beauty should never come at the cost of health. Here's a look at some of the most dangerous substances once considered "essential" for beauty and health.

ARSENIC: THE "FAIRNESS" POISON

Arsenic is a potent poison. In 18th- and 19th-century Europe, pale skin was a symbol of wealth and refinement. To achieve this, women sometimes ingested arsenic wafers or powders. Advertisements even promised a flawless complexion with products like *Dr. James P. Campbell's Safe Arsenic Complexion Wafers*. Arsenic is a potent poison. Chronic exposure caused anaemia, hair loss, organ damage, and often death.



Radioactive radium was in every beauty product in the early 1900s

LEAD: THE PALE SKIN OBSESSION

Ancient Greeks, Romans, and Elizabethan elites prized pale, smooth skin. To achieve the perfect porcelain skin, they used lead-infused creams. Lead absorption through the skin could lead to poisoning, facial paralysis, and infertility. Lead-based powders, including the infamous *Venetian ceruse* used by Queen Elizabeth I, were popular cosmetics.

MERCURY: THE SILENT NEUROTOXIN

Mercury found its way into face

creams, teething powders, and even medical treatments for syphilis well into the 20th century. Some modern illegal whitening creams in parts of Asia and Africa still contain this heavy metal. This deadly substance attacks the brain, kidneys, and nervous system. Long term use could cause tremors, insanity, and severe organ damage.

RADIUM: GLOWING BEAUTY AT A PRICE

In the early 1900s, radioactive radium was added to tonics, toothpaste, and even face creams to give a "glow from within." Radium exposure caused anaemia, bone cancer, and death. Beauty literally became a matter of life and death. Workers in factories producing these products, famously known as the *Radium Girls*, suffered horrific health consequences.

BELLADONNA: EYES THAT KILL

The plant's name, *Belladonna*, meaning beautiful woman, hints at its deadly appeal. Renaissance Italian women used belladonna, or deadly nightshade, to dilate their pupils, making their eyes appear larger and more seductive. Little did they know that *Belladonna* can cause blurred vision, hallucinations, heart problems, and even death.

Don't skip sunscreen, even in winter

The arrival of winter brings with it the inevitable cold, dry air and a muted landscape. While this seasonal shift is often welcomed, it simultaneously introduces challenges for our skin, which becomes dull, lifeless, and prone to various issues. To maintain healthy and radiant skin throughout this dry season, special care is essential, with prioritising deep moisturisation as the most critical first step.

However, is moisturising truly enough?

During the cold season, a common belief dictates that products like creams, lotions, petroleum jelly, body oil, or moisturisers are enough. We rely on these heavy-duty items to combat visible dryness and maintain skin suppleness. This leads to a major misconception: that because the sun's intensity feels weaker in winter, there is no need for sunscreen. This is a crucial mistake. Sunscreen application is just as vital as any other routine. The sun's damaging UV rays can penetrate deep into your skin, even on cloudy skies or cold weather, leading to skin damage, tanning, dullness, and the formation of dark spots.

When choosing a winter sunscreen, consider your skin type, budget, and preferred brands to find the most suitable option. The current market offers a wide array of sunscreens from both medical and beauty brands. While high-end, medical-grade sunscreens are often prized for their quality, many beauty brands provide good-quality products in the mid-to-budget-friendly range that are highly popular in the Bangladeshi market.

Unilever's new Glow & Lovely Bright UV Duo Sunscreen has recently obtained



significant attention from users. Available in two variants, SPF 30 and SPF 50, this product is suitable for all skin types and for year-round use. It gives up to 99% protection from harmful UV rays and actively works to reduce dullness and dark spots. Its non-sticky, lightweight formula leaves no white cast and is budget-friendly.

Don't let the common misconceptions of winter lead you to skip this essential protection. Give your skin the complete shield it deserves all year long.



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