

## Let your dermatologist be the guide for your skin, not your neighbour

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The definition of beauty has evolved over time and while times are changing now, the perfect skin seen on screens with glowing skin all the time became the major benchmark for females to feel beautiful. Our country has an industry thriving with the popularity of fairness creams in the skin care market and people tend to continue their usage based on the hype around them without really wondering about the mysterious veil over the contents of these creams. Amid the absence of adequate awareness around the harmful effects of popular fairness creams, most of these often continue to be produced as a vulnerable cocktail of steroids, hydroquinone, and tretinoin. The prolonged use of these leads to grave health concerns and damage the skin deeply and sometimes even irreversible.

So many times, we end up taking suggestions from social media, blogs, beauty parlour employees, our neighbours, sisters or even friends and tend to believe in the product that they use. What we fail to understand is that mostly what works for one person may not work for the other one because of differences in the skin type, skin sensitivity and the exposure the skin has suffered. Instead of highly expected fairness results, this rather leaves the person distressed after the usage. It might even feel very nice and effective in the beginning, but you start seeing the ill effects, sooner or later. And that's when most people realize they should rather consult a dermatologist than a neighbour or a pharmacist!

As we age, our skin is exposed to a lot, climatic changes, dust, pollution and sometimes just our lack of care and all that makes the gradually appearing ageing signs more evident. Yes, there are always certain regimens of self-care for our skin and some home remedies that are even beneficial but it also sometimes takes an expert opinion from a dermatologist to ensure our skin safety.

Steroids are used by dermatologists sometimes to treat eczemas, inflammatory and autoimmune conditions such as pemphigus, sarcoidosis, vitiligo and lichen planus, some kind of scars such as keloids, hypertrophic scars and some kinds of hair loss. Dermatologists highlight that while steroids can prove to be useful drugs, it is extremely important to know when, where, how, how much and for how long should these be used. The inappropriate use of steroids causes side-effects that can even lead to serious fungal infections and can even make the skin very thin. These creams can cause acne, rashes, redness and wrinkles on the skin and can also result in stretch marks on the skin.

Many creams today contain steroids because there are many skin diseases which are treated with steroids. But steroids in skin whitening creams make the skin more acne-prone, sensitive and wrinkly.

Some dermatologists even state that skin problems are becoming not just more common but almost non-treatable and most of it is due to the widespread use of creams containing steroids and our lifestyle especially eating habits. Just to get a few shades fairer, people are unknowingly risking their skin quality and making room for serious infections and grave side-effects, they say.

Experts also say that doctors usually prescribe ointments for some particular time duration. However, many a time when patients see positive effects, they tend to continue using these products even beyond the suggested time period and this self-administration causes a lot of skin damage. Even the so-called herbal products may shroud steroids while endorsing their products as 'Ayurveda' but one can actually not know how truly natural elements are used in those products and so it becomes important to use them with care and under guidance for the required duration to avoid concerns like permanent pigmentation, skin cancer, liver damage, mercury poisoning and others.

Acne has become the most common problem irrespective of age and gender these days. This is a rising concern not just among the teenagers but adults alike.

Some of the common side effects of these "STEROID – CONTAINING" FAIRNESS CREAMS can include:

- Acne or worsening of existing acne.
- Worsening of a pre-existing skin infection.
- Folliculitis – inflamed hair follicles.
- Thinning of the skin – this can make the affected skin more vulnerable to damage; for example, you may bruise more easily.
- Stretch marks – that can become permanent, although they'll probably become less noticeable over time.
- Contact dermatitis – this is characterised by skin irritation caused by a mild allergic reaction to the substances in a particular topical corticosteroid.
- Rosacea, which is a condition that causes the face to become red and flushed.
- Changes in skin colour – this is usually more noticeable in people with dark skin.
- Excess amount of hair growth on the area of skin being treated.

There are other treatments which can help also in skin lightening, fairness creams are not the only solution, experts point out. Fairness creams with lighter ingredients are safer to use. But one has to be careful about the ingredients as there are many different kinds of fairness creams available. The best way to make your skin get fairer is to avoid getting tanned and using a very safe de-pigmenting regimen.

The above mentioned side effects are more likely if you're:

- Using a more potent corticosteroid (If potent or very potent topical corticosteroids are used for a long time or over a large area, there's a risk of the medication being absorbed into the bloodstream and causing internal side effects as well)
- Using it for a very long time, or over a large area.
- The older generation and the very young ones are more vulnerable to side effects

Hence it is of utmost important to not be careless with your most sensitive sense organ, your SKIN. Always consult certified dermatologists before exposing your skin to any products.

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