

# Potential **miscarriage** link to mercury in skincare products

➤ Pregnant women advised to be cautious in personal care items use and avoid those that may harm foetus

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**PETALING JAYA:** The dangers of mercury-laced skincare products go far beyond skin damage, with experts warning that they could pose significant risks to pregnant women and their unborn babies.

Universiti Putra Malaysia obstetrician and gynaecologist Dr Nurul Iftida Basri said mercury absorbed through the skin could cross the placenta, leading to neurological and kidney abnormalities in developing foetuses.

Citing research, she said women exposed to high mercury levels are at greater risk of miscarriages.

"This could be due to an increased release of oxidative radicals, which may affect foetal development."

She said detecting mercury poisoning in the body during pregnancy is a major challenge because it presents only subtle symptoms.

"There are no obvious symptoms but women who have used mercury-containing skincare products for an extended period may experience allergic reactions, rashes, skin peeling or itching."

It has been reported that women who used skincare products containing mercury during pregnancy have experienced miscarriages, raising concerns on the potential link between the two.

Nurul Iftida added that if a pregnant woman has unknowingly used skincare products containing mercury, she should discontinue use immediately and undergo close monitoring.

"The pregnancy should be monitored for foetal growth due to the risk of having a low-birthweight baby. There is also the risk of preterm birth, so early treatment should be sought if there are signs of premature labour."

She explained that the primary impact of mercury exposure on foetuses is on neurological development, which could result in low IQ and decreased memory, attention, language skills and spatial cognition.

"The first trimester appears to be the most vulnerable period for mercury exposure. There is a lack of research to determine the most critical period but since embryological development occurs in the first trimester,



Chang warned that the dangers of mercury exposure also apply to others, not just pregnant women. – **AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN**

I would say early pregnancy carries a higher risk compared with later stages."

She advised pregnant women to exercise caution when selecting skincare products, emphasising the importance of avoiding ingredients that may harm foetal development.

"Pregnant women should also avoid ingredients such as retinol, hydroquinone, Vitamin A, tetracycline and salicylic acid. It is always best to consult a doctor before using any skincare products during pregnancy."

Selayang Hospital Dermatology Head Dr Elizabeth Chang warned that the dangers of mercury exposure also apply to others, not just pregnant women.

Many women suffer from long-term mercury poisoning, often without realising its effects until it causes significant harm, such as tremors, memory loss or kidney damage, she added.

"Some users develop extreme sensitivity after stopping these products, leaving their skin dry, irritated and unable to tolerate basic skincare."

"Some continue using mercury-laced creams, unaware that they are worsening their condition."

She said the path to recovery requires patience and proper care, with the first step being cessation of mercury exposure completely.

"Gentle, fragrance-free moisturisers with ceramides and niacinamide could help repair the skin."

She said ingredients such as Vitamin C and azelaic acid could manage hyperpigmentation but strict sun protection is crucial.

She also emphasised the need for stronger enforcement against illegal beauty products.

"Despite regulations, mercury-laced creams are easily available online. Consumers must be cautious and avoid anything that promises instant whitening. No beauty trend is worth compromising your long-term health."

She said while the Health Ministry has been imposing bans on harmful beauty products, they continue to flood the market through online platforms and informal sellers.

"Stronger enforcement, stricter penalties and increased consumer awareness are crucial to address their use and safeguarding public health."