

# EcoWaste coalition finds mercury in skin whitening products, pushes crack down on dangerous cosmetics

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Eleven out of 12 skin whitening products tested by the EcoWaste Coalition had mercury levels of up to 28,600 parts per million (ppm), atrociously over and above the Philippine regulatory limit of 1 ppm for mercury in cosmetics.

The toxic watchdog has duly notified Dr. Suzette Lazo, Director of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) last Friday about its survey, who, via e-mail, told the group that the agency “will conduct its own operations based on this.”

Mostly made in China, the tainted products are likewise in violation of the tolerable limit of 1 ppm under the “Hygienic Standards for Cosmetics” of the People’s Republic of China, the EcoWaste Coalition pointed out.

The toxic watchdog disclosed the data following the recent release of its report on toxic metals in children’s products in the Philippines that, among others, found some children’s cosmetics loaded with mercury in the range of 3 to 77 ppm.

“We are shocked to find high levels of mercury in the cosmetics we tested that ranged from 1,085 to 28,600 ppm, in brazen breach of the country’s regulatory limit,” said Aileen Lucero, Safe Cosmetics campaigner of EcoWaste Coalition.

“None of the 11 products listed mercury as ingredient in their labels, indicating the manufacturers’ failure to provide truthful information that can help consumers make sound choices,” she said.

“Of these mercury-tainted cosmetics, five brands were recalled in 2010 by the FDA for containing excessive mercury and should no longer be in the market. Their continued sale violates the Food and Drug Administration Act of 2009,” she added.

Visiting Chicago-based scientist Dr. Joe DiGangi tested the skin whitening products bought by the EcoWaste Coalition using the X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) device, a chemical analyzer widely used by private companies and regulatory agencies in US.

The samples were purchased last July 23, from two Chinese drug stores, one cosmetics shop and two sidewalk vendors all located in Quiapo, Manila.

“Mercury is poison that should not be present in consumer products, especially those applied directly to the skin,” said DiGangi, who is the Science and Policy Advisor of IPEN, a global civil society network, which includes the EcoWaste Coalition.

“Mercury harms the nervous system, the kidneys, and other organ systems,” DiGangi warned.

Among the skin whitening creams that failed the regulatory limit on mercury based on the analysis made the EcoWaste Coalition and IPEN were:

1. Miss Beauty Magic Cream, 28,600 ppm
2. Jiaoli 7-Day Specific Eliminating Freckle AB Set Cream, 12,400 ppm
3. JJJ Magic Spots Removing Cream, 9,610 ppm
4. The Flower Woman 7-Day Whitening and Spot and Night Set Cream, 7,754 ppm
5. Jiaoli Miraculous Cream, 7,665 ppm
6. Sara Glutathione Sheep Placenta Whitening and Anti-Spot Cream, 6,210 ppm
7. Szitang 7-Day Specific Whitening and Spot AB Set Cream, 5,886 ppm
8. Beauty Girl Natural Olive and Sheep Essence 10-Day Double Whitening Cream, 3,638 ppm
9. Miss Beauty Excellent Therapy Whitening Cream, 2,304 ppm
10. Aichun Beauty Green Tea Whitening Speckle Removing Series Cream, 1,820 ppm
11. Aichun Beauty Whitening Freckle Day and Night Cream, 1,574 ppm. ■