

Dying to look younger?



Best anti-ageing guru Lesley Reynolds Khan reports on the deadly beauty products to buy online – and why you should be sure to play safe

From DIY wrinkle jabs to scary skin-lighteners, the internet offers a shocking range of high-risk, low-cost beauty products, available at the click of the mouse. Many contain medical-grade ingredients, which, in the wrong hands, can cause life-threatening results.

I've seen patients with severe allergic reactions and injuries caused by a concentrated acid peel or prescription-strength cream bought online. One woman came to my clinic with horrific burns. The culprit? An online purchase that claimed to lighten dark circles. We found it contained liquid nitrogen – commonly used to freeze off warts and verrucas!

So before you head online for your anti-ageing fix, read on...

ANTI-AGEING INJECTIONS...

»Would you inject yourself with Botox without any training? It sounds unbelievable, but there are women doing just that in a bid to stay young without paying clinic prices. There have even been reports of DIY kits, complete with a face map showing where to apply the jabs, available for sale. That's despite the fact that Botox (a brand name for botulinum toxin A) is a prescription-only drug with possible side effects ranging from problems swallowing or speaking to having difficulty breathing, or even ending up dying.

Treating yourself could also leave you temporarily disfigured. One woman came into the clinic with droopy eyelids after injecting herself with Botox bought online. Also, this 'black market Botox' may not be the genuine article. It's like playing Russian roulette with your health.

FILLERS, often injected to enhance lips, fill out wrinkles and plump skin are also available online. While less toxic than Botox, they can leave lasting damage, as some



types are permanent or take a long time to break down. I saw a woman left with very lumpy lips, which we had to correct by dissolving the filler and reshaping her lips with proper filler after a week.



Play it safe
Never, ever buy injectables online. An experienced cosmetic doctor can give the most natural result and is trained to deal with reactions. See www.cosmeticdoctors.co.uk.

RESURFACING PEELS...

»Chemical peels give amazing, skin-boosting results. There are different varieties and strengths, from glycolic and salicylic acid peels that need minimal downtime – ideal for acne, brightening and boosting collagen – to stronger TCA peels that can leave skin irritated for a week. These can be used for pigmentation

and deeper lines. All peels carry a risk of allergic reaction, which is why clinics sometimes give patients home-care products for a week or so, then start off on a mild peel, building to a stronger one if the skin copes well. But some websites offer super-concentrated peels for use at home.



Play it safe

Go to a good clinic or use glycolic/salicylic-based peels from a brand you know. Try **Philosophy The Microdelivery One-minute Purifying Enzyme Peel**, £32 or **No7 Glycolic Peel Kit**, £x.



Don't try this – or lots of other beauty treatments – at home



SKIN LIGHTENERS...

»To tackle pigmentation, some women use products containing hydroquinone – an effective but potentially harmful skin-lightening chemical. Available only on prescription, it can cause hyperpigmentation, swelling and even liver and kidney damage. It must not be used long-term or by pregnant or breastfeeding women. There are reports of black and Asian women using hydroquinone creams to 'bleach' skin. Scarily, it's widely available online.



Play it safe

All skin tones are beautiful, so strive instead to make your complexion the best it can be. Forget lightening products – look for ones that even out skin – there are lots of safe, over-the-counter creams. These gently reduce pigmentation without scary side effects. Try **Clinique Even Better Clinical Dark Spot Corrector**, £38.

PRESCRIPTION CREAMS...

»Retin A (the acid form of vitamin A) is great for acne and sun damage, as it increases cell turnover and unblocks pores. However, it can cause extreme dryness, irritation and sun sensitivity, so is only available on prescription in this country. Some beauty addicts, however, are hunting it down online.



Play it safe

Only use Retin A under the guidance of your doctor or dermatologist. Retinol, another form of vitamin A, is in over-the-counter cosmetics, such as the **RoC Retin-Ox Wrinkle Correxion Daily Moisturiser**, £25.75. It's a lot milder than Retin A but can also be effective at repairing sun damage and reducing wrinkles.



»Lesley is an anti-ageing expert for the Harley Street Skin Clinic (www.harleystreetclinic.com)
»If you have a burning beauty question you need answered, email asklesley@natmags.co.uk