

Are Whitening Pills Safe?

(Excerpt from the article of Dr. Nina Halili-Jao, Allure; a Sunday section of the Philippine Star , November 21, 2004)

I recently received a letter from a reader inquiring about how I maintain my smooth complexion. She also inquired about glutathione, whitening pill.

Glutathione is said to be a small protein composed of three amino acids called cysteine, glutamic acid and glycine. Glutathione is produced by the body in response to the environment (including pollution), the water we drink, and the chemicals and pesticides found in the food we eat that damage our cells and systems.

Glutathione is usually referred to as the body's "master anti-oxidant." It is said to be important in maintaining good health and long life. A person who is exposed to more toxins is said to use up his supply of glutathione. Without the protection of glutathione, cells will die at a faster rate, leading to quicker aging and a higher risk of developing diseases induced by toxins such as carcinoma. The whitening of the skin is said to be just a side effect of this anti-oxidant medication when the dosage is doubled.

As an anti-oxidant/ anti-aging medication, glutathione's recommended dosage is between 10 and 20mg. per Kg. BW (body weight) per day divided into two doses. As a whitening capsule, the computation should be in double dose: 0-40mg / Kg BW per day in two to three divided dose.

How long should one take L Glutathione? If your skin is medium brown, take it for at least one to three months. A person with dark brown skin will need glutathione for at least three to six months. Those with very dark skin should take it for six to 12 months. A person with dark skin may need L glutathione for at least two years or even more. Once a person has her desired skin color, the maintenance dose will just be 500mg once a day.

A person taking L glutathione should take Vitamin C two to three times more than the dose of L Glutathione. Why is Vitamin C needed? This is to keep L Glutathione in its absorbable or reduced form. This will release the potential of Vitamin C's derivatives' whitening properties.

L Glutathione has no known side effects or interactions even if given orally in prolonged use. However there are at least two known drug interactions. Remember that you must never take L Glutathione if you are being given an anti-psychotic medication such as Haloperidol or an chemotherapeutic drug like Cisplatin.

Regarding the safety of glutathione in the liver, it is said that “the levels of glutathione in the liver is critically linked to the liver’s capacity to detoxify.” This means that the higher the glutathione content, the greater the liver’s capacity to detoxify harmful chemicals. Typically, when we are exposed to chemicals like alcohol which can damage the liver, the concentration of glutathione in the liver is substantially reduced. This reduction makes the liver susceptible to damage.

Beware! Not all glutathione out in the market are safe. What type of L Glutathione preparations must be AVOIDED? L glutathione preparations that are in combinations with the following:

- Tyrostat (L tyrosine)

Their oral format is still highly questioned by clinicians. This is used only for topical consumption and not to be taken orally. There were reports that even their hair turned white and painful feeling and firming of the breasts.

- Goat/Sheep Placenta Extract:

Like that of Tyrostat, this is not recommended to be taken orally. The usual complaints of users are they get pimples and they get fat.

- Vitamin A and E.

Of course there’s nothing wrong with these vitamins but you should consider that skin whitening pills will take you months and months of daily-dose regimen. These vitamins can lead to hypervitaminosis which is toxic to our body with prolonged use. These forms of vitamins are what we call fat-soluble vitamins (such as Vitamin A, D,E and K). Fat Soluble vitamins are metabolized and hydrolyzed in the liver. With prolonged use, fat soluble vitamins can be detrimental to one’s health since an excess of these preparations will not just simply be excreted; they will just be stored in the liver. This is the reason why doctors advise their patients to rest their liver after at least a month of taking fat-soluble vitamins. Water-soluble vitamins such as Vitamin C and B-complex, when not used by the body, will just be excreted via urine, bile or feces.

Here are the people who will need L Glutathione supplement: smoker; alcohol drinker; those 40 years old and above; those who exercise excessively/body builders; low sperm count; those with liver problems; those with cataracts; those recovering from chemotherapy; those exposed to chemicals and pesticides; the immunocompromised; low immune system; those who want fairer and whiter skin; and consumers of fish oils.

The *other names of Oral L glutathione* preparations are master anti-oxidant capsule; anti-aging capsules; whitening capsule; skin whitening capsule; bleaching capsule and best anti-oxidant.

Remember – before buying L glutathione preparations, check their combinations, ingredients and components.