

Skin Whitening Injection

What is skin whitening injection?

Skin whitening injection may involve the use of one or more of the substances like tranexamic acid (or transamin), glutathione, vitamin C and vitamin E. The purported cosmetic purposes of the injection procedure include skin whitening, anti-wrinkle and scar removal.

Description of the procedure

During the procedure, the skin of the targeted injection area will be cleaned and the above substance(s) will be injected into the body in the form of intravenous infusion or intradermal injection.

Purported mechanism of action

It is purported that the anti-oxidant effect of vitamin C, vitamin E or glutathione can counteract the adverse effect of free radicals to the skin. Tranexamic acid inhibits the synthesis of melanin in melanocytes, and so, may be able to treat hyperpigmentation. However, there is limited scientific evidence from medical literature to support the effectiveness of this procedure.

Potential risks and complications

- As human skin acts as a natural barrier to microorganisms, any procedure that damages the skin may increase the risk of infection.
- Local side effects following intradermal injection of the substances include bleeding, haematoma formation, bruising, and scarring. Intravenous injection of the substances can result in systemic side effects including sepsis and anaphylaxis.
- Chronic use of tranexamic acid carries thromboembolic risk; while serious complications including Stevens-Johnson syndrome, toxic epidermal necrolysis, derangement of thyroid and renal functions, and severe abdominal pain have been reported after intravenous infusion of glutathione.

Advice to the public

1. Injections should ONLY be performed by locally registered doctors.
2. Currently there is no established evidence to support the purported effects of skin whitening injection. Customers should think twice before undergoing the procedure.
3. Understand the procedure, potential risks and complications of the treatment

before you decide to undergo the procedure.

4. You should not receive the procedure if you have a history of allergy to the injection substances.
5. If you are referred by a beauty service provider to a doctor to undergo the cosmetic procedure, you should request the full name of the doctor in writing. In Hong Kong, the full list of registered doctors can be found at the website of the Medical Council of Hong Kong (<http://www.mchk.org.hk/doctor/index.htm>). Customers are advised to enquire about the professional qualifications and relevant experience of the doctor.
6. If you develop any signs or symptoms of infection like fever, or feel unwell after the procedure, seek medical attention immediately.
7. Tranexamic acid is a pharmaceutical product and must be registered with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board before it can be supplied in the market. Tranexamic acid is a prescription-only medicine which must only be supplied by a doctor or obtained from a pharmacy upon a doctor's prescription. All registered pharmaceutical products must carry a Hong Kong registration number on their sales packs in the format of "HK-xxxxx". Unregistered pharmaceutical products should not be used because their safety, quality and efficacy cannot be guaranteed. If in doubt, you can visit the following website of the Department of Health Drug Office to check if a pharmaceutical product (e.g. tranexamic acid) has been registered with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board (http://www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/consumer/search_drug_database.html).
8. Topical anaesthetic cream may be applied for relief of pain or to desensitise skin before injection. According to the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Chapter 138), topical anaesthetic is also a pharmaceutical product, which must be registered before it can be supplied in Hong Kong. Topical anaesthetic usually contains lignocaine, which is a Part 1 poison with common side effects including hypersensitivity reaction, and can only be supplied by registered medical practitioners or hospitals, or be sold in pharmacies under the supervision of a registered pharmacist.