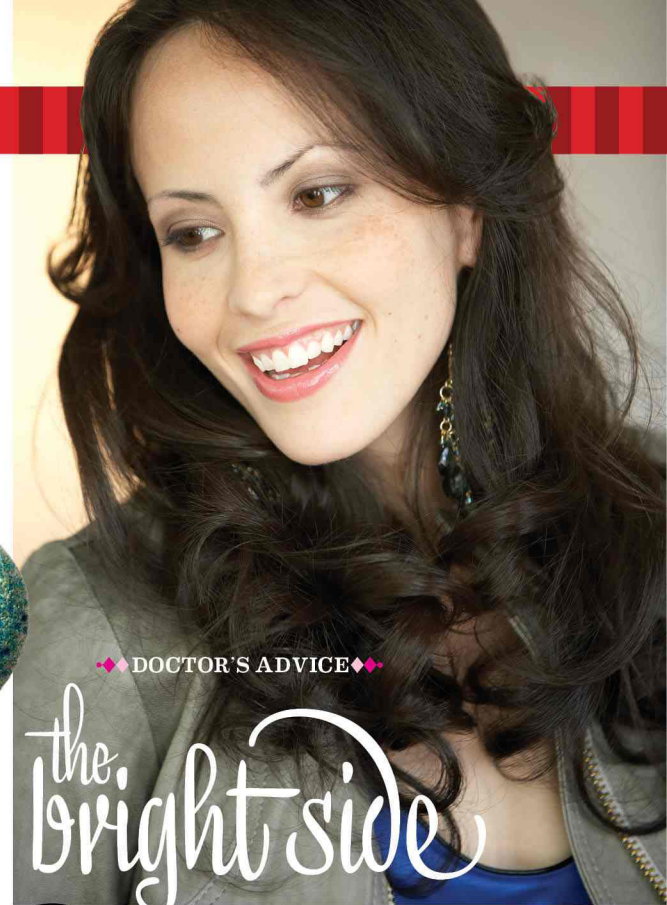


pretty in polish



◆◆ DOCTOR'S ADVICE ◆◆

the bright side

OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS, skin brighteners (sometimes called skin lighteners or bleaching creams) have created quite a buzz among women seeking anti-aging products. But with so many similar products available and with way too much scientific jargon to decipher, it's still a little unclear what these products actually do. So we asked Dr. Benjamin Barankin, a Toronto-based dermatologist and medical director of the Toronto Dermatology Centre (torontodermatologycentre.com), to give it to us straight.

WHAT THEY ARE "Skin brighteners help give the skin more glow and a more youthful, supple look and to fade out hyperpigmentation or dark spots due to age or the sun. Various products, systems and services can be used, such as creams with glycolic acid, vitamin C, tretinoin/retinol, lactic acid and hydroquinone, and some newer ingredients like coffeeberry extract, lumixyl, CIC2 and azelaic acid. There are chemical peels, microdermabrasion and lasers as well as leave-on products or products that can be used as masks."

WHO SHOULD USE THEM "Anyone with dull skin, melasma or hyperpigmentation or someone with sun or age spots or freckles. Almost anyone over the age of 40 would benefit."

WHAT TO EXPECT "These products can be quite effective if patient selection is accurate and the big picture (for example, sun protection) is discussed. Skin brighteners take time to work, meaning two to three months. There can be some mild redness and irritation or peeling in the first month, when the skin is getting used to the product. Mild cleansers and a good moisturizer during this time are key. If your skin becomes too dry or irritated, then you can skip one to two nights of application."

DOCTOR RECOMMENDATIONS "Multi-product systems can be quite beneficial since they incorporate active fading agents, sunscreens, anti-irritant products and a maintenance treatment. Seequin is a nice product, as is Neostrata-HQ. The Obagi system is possibly the best system for evening out skin tone and giving the skin a nice glow."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL ALBERSTAT (PORTRAIT) AND CARLO MENDOZA (PRODUCTS)