
FAQs About Hydroquinone

What is hydroquinone?

Hydroquinone is a topical skin-lightening ingredient commonly used in skin care products.¹⁻³ It is best known for its ability to lighten and reduce the appearance of brown spots³ and improve overall skin tone. Hydroquinone is a naturally derived antioxidant that can be found in a wide variety of plants and foods such as berries, wheat and grains, beans, tea, coffee, red wine, broccoli, and onions.³⁻⁵

How does hydroquinone work?

Color-producing cells within the skin can sometimes produce excess color. The excess color production causes brown spots to form on the surface of the skin. Hydroquinone works by inhibiting these color-producing cells and helping to lighten the brown spots.⁴

How is hydroquinone characterized internationally?

Hydroquinone is characterized as an ingredient, a cosmetic product, a functional cosmetic, or a drug.⁶⁻⁸ It is typically available in concentrations of 2% or 4%.⁶ Depending on the regulations in each country, hydroquinone is available either over the counter or with a prescription from a physician.⁹

Is hydroquinone considered an effective ingredient to treat skin discoloration problems?

Hydroquinone has been used as a treatment for skin discoloration problems in the United States since the 1950s. Since then, millions of patients have been using products containing hydroquinone.¹⁰

Is hydroquinone safe to use?

Hydroquinone has long been regarded as the gold standard for treating skin discoloration, and has been used in skin care products for more than 50 years.⁴ It is well documented in numerous clinical studies that 4% hydroquinone is safe and effective when used properly under a physician's care.³

Are there any side effects associated with using hydroquinone?

The most common side effects may include transient skin irritation, dryness, minor redness, or a mild burning sensation.¹

Rare and more severe allergic reactions may occur and are most often due to formula excipients.¹

What precautions should I take while using hydroquinone?

As with any prescription, it is important to follow all the directions on the product package and use only as directed by a physician.

Test a small area of the skin to check for any immediate side effects.

- Do not use hydroquinone at the same time as other skin-lightening products
- Always use sunscreen after applying hydroquinone to the skin
- Discard any hydroquinone-containing product that turns brown
- If you experience any severe side effects, contact a physician immediately

For more information about hydroquinone, speak to your physician.

Renowned physicians are actively prescribing hydroquinone to treat skin discoloration³

“Pigment disorders, while not life threatening, can have a significant psychological impact on those who are disfigured by multicolored skin. Hydroquinone has long been regarded by dermatologists as the gold standard in the treatment of certain pigmentary disorders of the skin. It is an effective treatment that provides improvements in both appearance and quality of life.”

– **Pearl Grimes, MD**
Director of the Vitiligo and Pigmentation Institute of Southern California

“Overall, adverse events reported with the use of hydroquinone ... have been relatively few and minor in nature ... hydroquinone is undoubtedly the most active and safest skin-depigmenting substance.”

– **Howard I. Maibach, MD**
Professor of Dermatology at the University of California School of Medicine, San Francisco

“Hydroquinone is the gold standard for treating pigmentation disorders and has been for many years ... I consider it to be very safe and effective.”

– **Susan Taylor, MD**
Founding Director of the Skin of Color Center in New York City and Assistant Professor of Dermatology at Columbia University

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