

β-Arbutin in skin lighteners is a health risk

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β-Arbutin is used as a skin lightening agent in cosmetics. The substance can be cleaved via metabolic pathways in the skin into D-glucose and hydroquinone. Hydroquinone is a suspected carcinogen which is banned in Europe in cosmetic products such as skin lightening agents. The EU Commission's scientific committee for consumer safety (SCCS) is currently re-assessing the active substance.

From the BfR's point of view, the use of β-Arbutin should be seen critically due to its property of releasing hydroquinone. The BfR assesses the use of β-Arbutin in cosmetic products as a possible health risk.

The full version of this BfR Opinion is available in German on <http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/arbutin-in-hautaufhellungsmitteln-ist-gesundheitlich-bedenklich.pdf>