

# WALMART AGREES to BLOCK SALES of SKIN LIGHTENERS CONTAINING MERCURY

*Action Taken in Response to California's Proposition 65 Legal Notice*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, June 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On June 10th, the Mercury Policy Project, a project of the Tides Center, settled a legal dispute under California's

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*Michael Bender, MPP Director,  
Zero Mercury Working Group  
Coordinator*

Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act (Proposition 65) with Walmart. The notice letter, sent September 30, 2025, alleged that Walmart failed to warn that using certain skin lightening creams sold on its website could expose consumers to high levels of mercury.

Mercury-added creams lighten the skin by suppressing the production of melanin. Regular use can lead to rashes, skin discoloration and blotching. Long-term use may damage the eyes, lungs, kidneys, and digestive and immune systems.

Because of health risks, the Food and Drug Administration

(FDA) only allows up to 1 part per million (ppm) of mercury in cosmetics. However, our lab tests confirmed that several of the creams purchased from Walmart.com contained levels of mercury well in exceedence and up to 5,000 times the legal limit.

“To protect consumers, we were willing to take legal action,” said Michael Bender, Executive Director of the Mercury Policy Project and co-coordinator of the Zero Mercury Working Group. “Walmart not only agreed to remove and keep these toxic products off their website but went a step further—by requiring certain third party sellers to test their products for mercury before offering for sale,” said Bender.

Terms of the Settlement include Walmart agreeing to a penalty payment of over a million dollars, including \$850,000 in civil penalties. Three-quarters (75%) of that amount are to be paid to the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard, as stipulated under Proposition 65.

“The purpose of California’s Proposition 65 is to provide crucial information so that consumers can make informed decisions for themselves and their families,” said Rachel Doughty, Esq. the

plaintiff's attorney from Greenfire Law, PC. "We're pleased to see Walmart agree to take affirmative steps to protect consumers."

A similar lawsuit was filed against Amazon in 2014. After a decade long legal battle, the California Attorney General and citizen enforcers settled the case last year.

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## Endnotes

\* Mercury in skin lighteners can not only poison the user, but also other household members and in some cases require costly cleanup of contaminated homes. Pregnant women, babies and young children are most at risk. In a published article, Gordon Vrdoljak, Ph.D. of the California Department of Public Health, stated: "If people are using the product quite regularly, their hands will exude it, it will get in their food, on their countertops, on the sheets their kids sleep on."

\*\* A Minnesota Health Advisory reported on one case of acute renal, dermatologic and neurological distress from a woman who applied "Nunn Care Crema Limpiadora" — one of the products purchased on Walmart.com — tested well above the legal limit. After using the cream for one year, she was diagnosed with membranous neuropathy, a kidney disease.

\*\*\* Greenfire Law, LLC corporate address is: P.O. Box 8055, Berkeley, CA 94707.

[1] Notice letter to Walmart: <https://www.zeromercury.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025-09-26-Notice-to-Walmart.pdf>

[2] FDA consumer alert: <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/health-fraud-scams/fda-warns-consumers-skin-products-containing-mercury-and-or-hydroquinone>

[3] California consumer alert:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDCPHP/DEODC/EHIB/CPE/Pages/CreamsTested4Mercury.aspx>

[4] Texas consumer alert: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news-alerts/skin-creams-containing-dangerous-levels-mercury>

[5] Minnesota health advisory:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/han/2020/jan14mercury.pdf>

[6] California research article:

<https://www.acs.org/pressroom/newsreleases/2014/august/rooting-out-skin-creams-that-contain-toxic-mercury.html>

[7] Walmart/Mercury Policy Project settlement agreement:

<https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/prop65/settlements/2025-03889S7812.pdf>

[8] California consumer alert:

[https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDCPHP/DEODC/EHIB/CPE/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Mercury in Skin Cream Latino English May2022.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDCPHP/DEODC/EHIB/CPE/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Mercury%20in%20Skin%20Cream%20Latino%20English%20May2022.pdf)

[9] California Attorneys General announcement:

<https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/attachments/press-docs/pre->

[filed%20copy%20executed%20amazon%20face%20creams%20proposed%20cj.pdf](#)

[10] Zero Mercury website: <https://www.zeromercury.org/mercury-added-skin-lightening-creams-campaign/>

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