

THE DRIP OF BEAUTY

BY KIM MORGAN

Probable side effects of IV drips for aesthetic purposes: bruising, infection and painful swelling at the IV site

- Excessive vitamins can cause liver damage
- Glutathione can cause patchy skin
- With multiple drips in the same IV, there can be drug interactions
- Rarely, they cause a life-threatening allergic condition called Stevens-Johnson syndrome

Dr Kiran Malik, plastic and cosmetic surgeon, Global Hospitals, Pune

With Kendall Jenner facing complications due to the IV drip vitamin therapy, we check how safe this celebrity-endorsed, controversy-riddled health fad is

Susan Joss

Since the last few years, several celebrities have opted for hydration therapy also known as the IV drip vitamin therapy. Some of its hardcore patrons include singers Rihanna, Adele, model Chrissy Teigen and reality star Khloé Kardashian. This is a therapy in which multiple vitamins and antioxidants are administered intravenously and it is treated as a quick fix for multiple lifestyle issues such as dull skin, exhaustion, hangover, jet lag, etc.

However, reportedly, Kendall Jenner can list complications after an IV drip session—held just before the Oscar night—went awry. This has made everyone sit up and question not only the safety of these procedures but also their validity.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

The trend began after a "vascular effect" experienced by patients who were being treated for liver failure. Dr Ricky Kapoor, dermatologist and skin laser specialist, St. Elizabeth Forth Hospital, Mahara, explains, "These patients who were injected with high doses of the nutrient antioxidants, in particular, glutathione and vitamin C, exhibited changes in the skin. Their hyperpigmentation cleared and there was a general improvement in the skin texture and appearance."

Several injectable combinations of antioxidants and vitamins are now being the vogue in the market, in vogue and every dose. All experts agree that none of them were approved by FDA in this date for aesthetic purposes.

IDEAL CAUSE FOR AN IV DRIP

Drips are recommended if the benefits outweigh the risks in case of limited options in treating a skin problem, or in cases of nutrient deficiency. When and if medically required, it is an efficient way to hydrate patients and administer essential nutrients.

According to Dr Sarabjit Shah, dermatologist, Rishi Hospital, Tharad, mostly IV

have "acute and chronic illnesses", those low on minerals and nutrients, and have chronic fatigue syndrome.

In Saji, Sharabjot, dermatologist, Apollo Clinic, echoes the same thoughts. He says, "Vitamin drips should ideally be used when there is a need for it and it would be best assessed by testing the blood levels of the suspected deficiencies and then supplementing them as needed. Blindly pumping your body with things that are not needed is never a good idea."

THE FAD OF 'GLUTA' SHOTS

A popular trend these days is the glutathione drip-also glutathione. Glutathione is supposed to be the mother of all antioxidants and gives the skin a glow. Therefore, almost all the celebrities opt for this drip.

"This is FDA approved for patients with liver diseases and hence a controversial topic for heavy treatment,"

says Dr Shah, adding, "There are cases of thrombophlebitis at the site of injection especially in men and women who are smokers and alcoholics."

FAMOUS FAKE PROMISES

Most people in metro cities are fatigued and dehydrated due to their hectic lifestyle and eating habits. The fact that an intravenous

care this instantly is only for those running against the clock. Therefore, they opt for this quick fix instead of investing long-term in diet and exercise.

"Words like detoxifying, skin glow, instant rejuvenation, intense boost, etc. are increasingly attractive. Anything that promises these is taken up by the masses without giving it a second thought about the genuineness of the product, and the science backing the results. Sellers are making the most of this human instinct," says Dr Kapoor.

She further adds, "One must especially beware of medical spas and spas offering intravenous therapies in 'spa-gone' clinics, where



Chrissy Teigen posts Instagram caption

patients are promised immediate relief from the symptoms of a hangover, flu/cold, headache, nausea and hooked up to a drip of fluids and medications, with the idea of immediate recovery. A cocktail of nutrients like this can risk reaching toxic levels."

THE TAKEAWAY

The human body has a systematic way of functioning. When it receives a high amount of vitamins or minerals in a single dose, it filters out the majority of them via kidney or liver. That is because they can't be stored in the body for use at a later time. So unless one has a medical deficiency, it logically does not justify the fact that these IV drips are beneficial. "The benefits being observed by those propagating it or receiving it may be peer-driven or psychological. There are studies going on across the world on some of these molecules, and still a documented, placebo-controlled, proven study establish the merits and side effects scientifically. They are being taken at the



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Kapoor

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Kendall Jenner posts Instagram