Dying to be Beautiful

When one hears about plastic surgery nightmares and eating disorders, it's easy to assume that obsession with beauty is only a modern-day phenomenon. The truth is that numerous beauty practices had been damaging health long before the present time.

The ancient Egyptians were the first to embrace cosmetics as a way of life. When looking at paintings of them, the first thing one will notice is their dark eyeliner. They applied it because they believed it could ward off evil spirits. Unfortunately, the substance they used was made of lead, which not only resulted in eye infections but also mental diseases. Ancient Greeks and Romans took the use of lead even further by grinding it into a white powder and covering their faces with it. Since they used so much more, they suffered harsher consequences, such as insanity and paralysis.

Thanks to Queen Elizabeth I, in the 1500s, it was routine to enlarge one's pupils with the toxic nightshade plant. It makes the eyes look brighter, but constant use can prove fatal. Furthermore, it wasn't just cosmetics that had been presenting problems. It was during this century that corsets became popular. The tight underwear was worn to shrink the size of the wearer's waist, but it could lead to breathing difficulty and even defects of the spine.

Today, famous people are still used as fashion barometers. Lady Gaga's style is one that is frequently copied. In one of her magic videos, the pop star wore special contact lenses that made her eyes look bigger. Impressed by the look, teenagers began purchasing similar contacts. However, while the items hadn't been harming the singer, others have complained of side effects ranging from irritation to blindness. In terms of footwear, high-heeled shoes have long been known to contribute to knee and foot issues, but this hasn't decreased their popularity. The current passion for skinny jeans is also harmful. When the jeans are too tight, they can cause nerve damage and numbness in the legs.

By observing the trends in recent years, it can be hard to imagine a time in the future when people will no longer be suffering in the name of beauty. Will people ever stop this dangerous search for the perfect look?

1. What do you think about looking good? plastic surgery, tight jeans, make-up