

BEAUTY BY NUMBERS



A portion of artist Damien Hirst's medicine-cabinet installation *The Sleep of Reason*

Pills

For centuries, scientists—and entrepreneurs—have searched for the magic bullet that will clear our skin, improve our concentration, even make us taller. Below, a look at how we've supplemented our lives over the years with pills promising not only to protect us but also to correct us.

—KATE SULLIVAN

2,000: Approximate number of years ago that catclaw vine was first taken to treat acne, in Peru.

1897: Year the Sears Roebuck & Co. Catalogue sold Dr. Worden's Female Pills for Weak Women—invigorating “pure vegetable pills” containing the “herb” coca leaf (cocaine).

12: Boxes of Dr. Rose's French Arsenic Complexion Wafers—for freckles, pimples, and “other facial disfigurements”—that the 1902 Sears Roebuck & Co. Catalogue recommended customers buy for a “sure cure.”

1943

Year a Midol advertisement boasted that the product “contains no opiates.”

1980s: Decade the food additive canthaxanthin was first used in tanning pills that were later found to cause hepatitis and yellowing of the retina.

1: Number of Heliocare antioxidant pills that, when taken daily, increase the skin's tolerance for the sun.

£1,000: Amount one Australian

pharmacist charged for his last packet of Cellesane anti-cellulite pills, which contained dried ginkgo biloba extract, among other herbal ingredients.

167: Number of suicides by people taking the acne drug Accutane that had been confirmed by the FDA by 2002.

2009: Year Accutane was taken off the market for “business reasons.”

63,000: Number of plaintiffs who sued Wyeth, the maker of Fen-phen, in 2005 for injuries caused by the diet drug.

44: Percentage of allure.com readers who said they would take a dietary supplement to reduce fat.

17: Percentage who said they would take one to improve their memory.

20: Percentage of women aged 19 to 20 who reported in a 2006 University of Minnesota study that they had used diet pills to lose weight.

3: Times more likely they were to be overweight at the end of the five-year study than the other participants.

15: Grams of fat per meal someone using the diet pill Alli should not exceed, lest they suffer the “oily spotting” side effect that led the manufacturer to suggest wearing dark pants.

6: Weeks it takes to see results including healthier hair, nails, and skin from a daily fish-oil supplement, packed with

omega-3 fatty acids, according to Dr. Andrew Weil, author of *Healthy Aging*.

2006: Year an ad in Singapore falsely claimed that a brand of anti-aging supplements whitened skin.

33: Percentage of people (mostly women) who said they had used beauty supplements in a 2007 Mintel survey.

\$100,000: Amount the creators of a breast-enhancement supplement were fined in 2008 for misrepresenting it as an “herbal alternative to plastic surgery.”

2002

Year a study found that taking a bone-strengthening supplement for four weeks made people slightly taller.

150: Milligrams of estrogen in the typical birth control pill in the 1960s. (Today, most contain just 20 to 30.)

100 million: Number of women worldwide who take birth control pills.

40 to 50: Percentage of women who reported an increased sexual desire at the end of a Viagra study—whether they took the drug or a placebo.