

# Radium, the Women's Element: A Historical Analysis of Radium and its Disproportional Effect on Women During the Radium Craze

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Radium turned the world of chemistry upside down. Not only was the discovery made by Marie Curie in partnership with her husband, earning her a Nobel Prize, the element also became entwined in mainstream culture. It was a household name due to its advertisement as a “wonder drug,” but also a fascination with the glow that the element naturally had. Radium was everywhere, from makeup to medicine to musicals. While research was catching on to the dangers of radium, it would take many years to get it off the main ingredients list. Until then, radium was a staple in the lives of women everywhere, especially in the early 1900s as they were hired to paint watch-faces with a glowing radium paint that would eventually lead to numerous health side-effects. So, throughout radium's time in the public eye, women also came front and center. For better or for worse, radium pulled women into the world's spotlight. This presentation intends to show the correlation between the prominent radium consumerism and the disproportionate effect that these products had on women during the Radium Craze through a feminist lens. Topics include exploring the response to Marie Curie discovering the element and how she developed radium's uses in medicine, how the Radium Craze affected the make-up industry, and how the Radium Girls were able to reform industry policies regarding health and safety, through biographies and other prominent literature on the subject.