

What You Can Do

Avoid personal care products with the chemicals listed in our top 12 toxins and select products that contain natural and fewer ingredients.

Contact your favorite cosmetic companies and tell them that you want safer products.

Demand that companies fully disclose ingredients.

Tell friends and family about dangerous chemicals in personal care products so they can learn more and take action.

Experiment with Do-It-Yourself recipes to make such personal care items as exfoliants, facial scrubs, and lip gloss.

Avoid products containing the term fragrance.

Top 12 Toxins to Avoid in Personal Care Products

1. Aluminum
(Aluminum Chloride, Chlorohydrate, and Zirconium)
2. Coal Tar (FD&C Blue 1, Green 3)
3. Fragrance
4. Formaldehyde
(diazolidinyl urea and imidazolidinyl urea)
5. Parabens
(methyl-, propyl-, butyl-, isopropyl-, and ethyl)
6. Petrochemicals
(appears as petrolatum, paraffin or mineral oil)
7. Polyethylene Glycol (PPG/PEG)
8. Phthalates - Dibutyl (DBP), Diethyl (DEH), Diethylhexyl (DEHP)
9. Sodium Lauryl Sulfate, Sodium Laureth Sulfate (SLS)
10. Toluene
11. Triethanolamine (TEA) & Diethanolamine (DEA)
12. Triclosan

Helping to create a healthier community for women and those who love them.

Empower women with reliable scientific information

Advocate for environmental policy solutions

Educate the community about environmental health risks

Are Your Personal Care Products Safe?

Informed Women Have the Power to Drive Change

\$50 billion is spent globally on cosmetics and personal care products every year.

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1405 Shady Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15217-1350
(412) 420-2290

womenforahealthyenvironment.org

SOURCES

cancer.gov

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Top 10 Reasons to Check the Ingredients in Your Personal Care Products

On average women use 12 personal care products daily, teenager girls use 17, and men use 6, but consumers need to be aware of the chemicals present in everyday products. Potential carcinogens, allergens, and toxins are in products we use every day. In fact, the Cosmetic Ingredients Review Panel has assessed fewer than 20% of 12,500 cosmetic ingredients and found only a handful of the ingredients to be safe. Here is a list of ten things to be aware of when buying personal care products.

1. Greenwashing and Pinkwashing

Greenwashing is when companies use words like “natural”, “organic”, “ecofriendly”, and “hypoallergenic” to depict a greener product. In reality, those words are merely marketing terms and have no legal meaning. Pinkwashing is when companies offer proceeds from the sale of products to support breast cancer research, most commonly identified by pink ribbons on the label. However these products contain toxic ingredients that can negatively affect our health. Make sure the products that you are buying are safe for the environment and yourself.

2. Fragrance Contents are Unknown

Fragrances are considered trade secrets, so companies can list the ingredient “Fragrance” on a product and not reveal all of the contents. Fragrance can contain a wide range of 3,000 chemicals under this term. The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics estimated that an average of 14 secret chemicals are not listed on products and are listed under “fragrance.” It’s best to purchase products that are labeled as fragrance-free.

3. Toxic Trio in Nail Products

Some nail products still contain what is known as the “toxic trio,” dibutyl phthalate (DBP), formaldehyde, and toluene. These chemicals are used in nail polishes and hardeners to make the products last longer, add shine, and retain color, but all cause serious health problems. DBP causes developmental problems to unborn babies, formaldehyde is a known carcinogenic, and toluene causes headaches, fatigue, and dizziness. The “toxic trio” can be avoided. Companies like OPI, Sally Hansen, and Orly have removed them from their products.

4. Lead in Your Lipstick

In 2009, the US Food and Drug Administration conducted a study on a variety of lipsticks to compare lead content. The study found that all lipsticks contained lead ranging in levels between 0.09 to 3.06 ppm. Lead is dangerous because it is a neurotoxin which causes behavior, language, and learning issues. Lead is impossible to avoid in lipsticks since it is not a listed ingredient. Email or call your favorite cosmetic company to tell them the importance lead free lipstick is to you.

5. Skin Lightening Cream Crisis

Skin lightening cream is used to lighten skin, age spots, and blemishes. Hydroquinone is found in many skin lighteners and works by decreasing the production of melanin pigment in the skin. This chemical (a known animal carcinogen) is toxic to the skin, brain, immune system, and reproductive system. Though banned in the European Union, the United States allows products with up to 2% hydroquinone to be sold. Along with hydroquinone, chromium and mercury have both been found in skin lighteners. Consumers need to be aware of the products they are lathering on their skin and realize that products imported from other countries may not be labeled with the proper ingredients.

Companies don't deny chemicals in their product but argue that a little bit of toxic chemicals isn't going to hurt anyone.

6. Toxins in Baby Shampoo

A study done in 2009 by the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics found shampoos where Sesame Street characters graced the label and ingredients referred to as “pure & gentle” actually contained formaldehyde and 1,4-dioxane. These chemicals are possible carcinogens and for children with sensitive skin can cause rashes. Buy shampoos for your baby that are sulfate free, formaldehyde free and 1,4-dioxane free.

7. Much About Mineral Makeup

Mineral makeup is getting rave reviews for allowing skin to breathe and having a weightlessness feeling, instead of covering up the skin. The minerals are light reflective which produce a glow and protect users from the sun. The problem with this makeup is that not all products labeled “mineral” are actually natural, so it is necessary to check the ingredients of the “mineral” makeup before purchasing.



8. Hair Dye Danger

Over 33% of women over 18 and 10% of men use hair dyes. With over 5,000 different chemicals in hair dyes, there is cause for concern since some of these chemicals are carcinogenic. It is recommended that women don't dye their hair until the grays come in because of potential harmful chemicals. To find the safest hair dyes, go to Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep cosmetic database where products are rated for safety. (www.ewg.org/skindeep)

9. Dandruff Shampoos Containing Coal Tar

Coal tar is found in dandruff shampoos because it is effective in removing dead and dry skin cells. It is dangerous because it is a possible carcinogen and can build up in the body which is also a cause for concern. Coal tar is usually listed as FD&C Blue 1 or Green 3 on ingredient labels, so one should also be familiar with these names. Shampoo that contains this harmful chemical should be avoided and alternative shampoos should be purchased.

10. Phthalates, Parabens, and Triclosan

These three ingredients can be found in deodorants, soaps, nail polish, toothpaste, and hundreds of other personal care products. Phthalates are found in “Fragrance” and considered an endocrine disruptor, potentially causing developmental and fertility problems. Paraben, a preservative, increases a products shelf life, but has been linked to cancer, fertility problems, and endocrine disruption. Triclosan is mainly found in antibacterial products such as hand washing soap. The more Triclosan is used, the greater our resistance to bacteria. Avoid these three ingredients when picking out your next personal care product.

The FDA has no authority to test chemicals in cosmetics, require testing on products, or to recall products.