



Extreme Makeover: Are your personal care products safe?

Did you know?

- **The average teenage girl uses 17 personal care products per day.**
- **The average adult woman uses 12 personal care products per day.**
- **The average adult male uses 7 personal care products per day.**

The products we put on our skin and bodies can affect our overall health and well-being. Therefore, it is important to know what is in the products we use. Are your personal care products really safe? Do you really know what is in your products?

There is particular concern regarding:

- **Fragrance:** Fragrance is considered a trade secret, so companies are not required to list the often dozens or hundreds of synthetic (and potentially harmful) chemical compounds it contains. Some hidden hazards in products containing synthetic fragrance may include: allergens and sensitizers, phthalates, neurotoxins, and synthetic musks.
- **Lead in lipstick:** Lead is a proven neurotoxin (toxic to the brain) that can cause learning, language, and behavioral problems (lowered IQ, reduced school performance, increased aggression) that is not listed on product labels as an ingredient so it's almost impossible to avoid. There is no safe level of lead exposure as it builds up in the body over time.
- **Contaminants in bath products:** Avoid using products that list ingredients that may be contaminated with potentially cancer-causing chemicals such as 1,4-dioxane (known human carcinogen, along with formaldehyde), including sodium myreth sulfate, PEG compounds and chemicals that end with "xynol," "ceteareth," and "oleth." Also avoid products containing formaldehyde-releasing preservatives, such as quaternium-15, DMDM hydantoin, imidazolidinyl urea and diazolidinyl urea.
- **Nail products and salons:** Nail polish, polish removers, and artificial nail products often contain many toxic chemicals known or suspected to cause cancer, reproductive harm, asthma, and other negative health effects.
- **Natural and organic products:** "Natural" and "Organic" are often used as marketing terms, rather than legally binding descriptions of products. In the United States, there are no legal standards for organic or natural personal care products. Top-selling brands have been found to contain 1,4-dioxane, a synthetic chemical carcinogen, as well as other potentially harmful ingredients.
- **Nanotechnology:** Beware of personal care products that state the use of nanoparticles, nanomaterials, or nanotechnology. This emerging technology is almost entirely untested for its health effects and there are no product labeling requirements and essentially nothing to warn consumers of nanoparticles in their products. Nanoparticles are found in some eye shadows, bronzers, sunscreens, and lotions.

Source: EWG's Skin Deep Database found at www.cosmeticsdatabase.com

***Follow the checklist of ingredients to avoid when you go shopping for your personal care products
[See reverse side of this page].***

Personal Care Products: Ingredients to **Avoid**

Harmful Ingredient	Why is it harmful?	Often Found In
✓ Mercury (thimerosal) *Other heavy metals may also be harmful.	Nervous system, reproductive, immune, and respiratory toxicity. High toxicity.	Eye drops, ointment, deodorants
✓ Lead/Lead acetate *Other heavy metals may also be harmful.	Neurotoxin that can cause learning, language, behavioral problems (i.e. lowered IQ, reduced school performance, increased aggression), miscarriage, reduced fertility, hormonal changes, menstrual irregularities in women, delayed onset of puberty in girls	Hair dyes, cleansers
✓ Formaldehyde and formaldehyde-releasing preservatives	Known human carcinogen. Eyes, nose, throat irritant. Can lead to skin irritation and dermatitis (allergic rash).	Nail products
✓ Toluene	Affects the nervous system, potentially causing dizziness, headaches, fatigue.	Nail products
✓ Petrochemicals *Byproduct of crude oil (appears on labels as petrolatum, mineral oil, paraffin)	May contain known/suspected human carcinogens, harmful breakdown products or impurities (i.e. 1,4-dioxane), which are not listed on ingredient labels.	Hair relaxers, shampoos, mascara, perfume, foundation, lipstick, lip balm
✓ Coal tar	Carcinogen, can accumulate in the body.	Dandruff shampoos, anti-itch creams, hair dyes
✓ Placenta	Produces progesterone, estrogen and other hormones that can interfere with body's normal hormone functions and can lead to serious health problems (i.e. breast cancer) when used in cosmetics.	Hair relaxers, moisturizers, toners
✓ Phthalates (i.e. dibutyl [DBP], diethyl [DEP], diethylhexyl [DEHP]) *Most products do not list phthalates on the label, but hide them under the term "fragrance."	Class of chemicals linked to hormone disruption, which can effect development and fertility (i.e. sperm damage in men).	Nail polish, fragrances, hair spray
✓ Parabens (i.e. methylparaben, propylparaben, ethylparaben, butylparaben)	Linked to cancer, endocrine disruption, reproductive toxicity, immunotoxicity, neurotoxicity, skin irritation. Some toxicity to cells and can disrupt hormone function.	Food, pharmaceutical and cosmetics products (deodorant, shampoos, conditioners, lotions, facial/shower cleansers and scrubs)
✓ Nitrosamines *Impurity not listed on product labels that form when certain proteins, such as diethanolamine (DEA) or triethanolamine (TEA), are used in the same products as preservatives that can break down into nitrates. As the compounds break down over time, they can recombine into nitrosamines.	Possible human carcinogen linked to cancer, birth defects, developmental or reproductive toxicity, immunotoxicity, neurotoxicity, systemic toxicity. Evidence of endocrine disruption at low doses.	Cosmetics and nearly every kind of personal care product (i.e. mascara, concealer, conditioner, baby shampoo, pain relief salve, sunless tanning lotion)
✓ Hydroquinone	A chemical carcinogen, immunotoxicant, and developmental and reproductive toxicant that increases deep exposure to UVA/UVB rays, increasing skin cancer risks. Risk to various organ systems, endocrine system, and neurotoxicity.	Skin lighteners. A contaminant/impurity in other cosmetics product ingredients (i.e. skin/facial cleansers, facial moisturizers, hair conditioners).
✓ 1,4-dioxane *Contaminant not listed on product labels.	Synthetic chemical carcinogen that is potentially cancer-causing.	Products that create suds (i.e. shampoo, liquid soap, body wash, bubble bath)
✓ Synthetic musks (i.e. Galaxolide, Tonalide)	Hormone disruptors. Toxic to aquatic life and can accumulate in the food chain.	Fragrances

For more information, please visit EWG's Skin Deep Database: www.cosmeticsdatabase.com.