

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics

www.SafeCosmetics.org



Safe Cosmetics Fact Sheet

THE PROBLEM: TOXIC CHEMICALS ARE WIDESPREAD IN BODYCARE PRODUCTS

According to industry estimates, on any given day **an average consumer may use as many as 25 different cosmetic and personal care products, including shampoo, nail polish, aftershave and lotion, containing more than 200 different chemical compounds.**



A common assumption within the cosmetics industry is that 70% of what is applied to the skin is absorbed into the body. It is not surprising, then, that many dangerous chemicals have

gotten into our bodies, our breast milk and our children. Some of these chemicals are linked to cancer, birth defects and other health problems that are on the rise in the human population. Some chemicals found in a variety of cosmetics - including phthalates, acrylamide, formaldehyde and ethylene oxide - are listed by EPA and the state of California as carcinogens or reproductive toxins.

While chemicals in any one product alone are unlikely to cause harm, repeated exposures to industrial chemicals from many different sources on a daily basis add up over time.



Chemicals from multiple products used every day may also interact in the body, causing even more harm.

Cancer-causing compounds According to a report by the Environmental Working Group, which examined ingredients in 7,500 personal care products, one of every 100 products on the market contains ingredients certified by government

authorities as known human carcinogens, including shampoos, lotions, make-up foundations, and lip balms

manufactured by Almay, Neutrogena, Grecian Formula, and many others. An astonishing *one-third of all products contain one or more ingredients classified as possible human carcinogens.*



Safe Cosmetics Campaign of Washington State

a project of the Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition

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Carcinogenic coloring EWG also found that seventy-one hair dye products contain ingredients derived from carcinogenic coal tar.

Coal tar containing products include dyes made by Clairol, Revlon, L'Oreal, and others. Coal tar hair dyes are one of the few products for which FDA has issued consumer advice on the benefits of reducing use, in this case as a way to potentially "reduce the risk of cancer" (FDA 1993). These products are of great concern to the health of women of color. For example, according to industry data, 42 percent of African-American women color their hair in a salon. African-Americans are almost twice as likely to die of cancer than any other minority group, and 20% more likely than whites.

Impure ingredients

According to EWG's research, nearly 70 percent of all products contain ingredients that can be contaminated with impurities linked to cancer and other health problems. Studies by FDA and European agencies show that in some cases these impurities occur in nearly half of all products tested (FDA 1996, DTI 1998). Some manufacturers buy ingredients certified by an independent organization called United States Pharmacopeia (USP), which may contain lower levels of harmful impurities, but the criteria for

certification are not public. Some companies may purchase or manufacture refined, purified ingredients, but many do not. Consumers and government health officials have no way to know.

Spotlight on New Research Recently released studies now link phthalates (hormone-disrupting chemicals often labeled only as "fragrance") to genital abnormalities in baby boys. Phthalates are found in many popular brands of

lotion, perfume, hair care and nail products. In a recent issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives*, scientists reported a direct correlation between phthalate levels in pregnant women and changes to the reproductive organs in their male babies. According to a recent FDA study, as many as two-thirds of products tested contain phthalates, which have also been linked to cancer.

THE PROBLEM: U.S. LAWS DON'T PROTECT US

Major loopholes in federal law allow the \$35 billion cosmetics industry to put unlimited amounts of chemicals into personal care

products with no required testing, no monitoring of health effects, and inadequate labeling requirements.

According to the government agency that regulates cosmetics, the FDA's Office of Cosmetics and Colors, "...a cosmetic manufacturer may use almost any raw material as a cosmetic ingredient and market the product without an approval from FDA" (FDA 1999).



Chemicals linked to cancer, birth defects and other health problems do not belong in products we use on our bodies. *Period.*

As a \$35 billion industry that sells images of health and beauty, the cosmetics industry should use non-toxic ingredients that will not harm our health.

Instead, the toxicity of product ingredients is monitored almost exclusively by a self-policing industry body, the Cosmetic Ingredient Review (CIR) panel. Because testing is voluntary and controlled by manufacturers, almost 90% of 10,500 ingredients used in personal care products have not been evaluated for safety by the CIR or anyone else (FDA 2000, CIR 2003). Therefore, companies routinely market products with ingredients that are poorly studied, not studied at all, or worse, known to pose potentially serious health risks.

THE SOLUTION: MAKE SAFER PRODUCTS AVAILABLE GLOBALLY



In January 2003, the European Union amended their Cosmetics

Directive to require cosmetics companies to remove all chemicals that are known or strongly suspected of causing cancer, mutation or birth defects from all personal care products sold in the EU beginning in 2004.

Companies like Procter & Gamble and Avon create the same name brands of perfumes, hair gels, nail polish and shaving creams for both the European and U.S. markets. Yet, they have so far failed to meet



Europe's new safety standards in markets outside Europe, even though a few companies like L'Oreal and Estee Lauder have taken that basic, initial step toward safer products globally.

Safe cosmetics are possible, and the EU's progress proves that companies can make products safer without disrupting the marketplace!

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics is urging all cosmetics companies to sign the Compact for Safe Cosmetics, a pledge to improve their product safety by:

- 1. Making cosmetics and personal care products that meet the minimum European safety standards in the U.S., and every market they serve and,***
- 2. Assessing all ingredients for chemicals linked to serious health consequences like cancer, reproductive harm, neurotoxicity and hormone disruption in their product lines, and replacing problem chemicals with safer alternatives within 3 years.***

The Next Wave in Safer Products

In spring 2004, the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics sent a letter asking cosmetics companies to sign the Compact for Safe Cosmetics. Since then, close to 200 companies, including the Body Shop, Burt's Bees, and Avalon Natural Products, have signed the pledge agreeing to remove hazardous chemicals from their products! The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics will keep the pressure on until larger companies agree to make products free of chemicals linked to cancer, birth defects, and other health problems.



TAKE ACTION TODAY FOR SAFE COSMETICS!

Join us in our demand for safer products and smarter laws and give the personal care products industry a makeover!

Visit us at: www.SafeCosmetics.org and sign up for email alerts

- Take a toxic tour of your bathroom
- Find out which products are safer options
- Demand that companies remove chemicals linked to cancer and birth defects from products we use on our bodies NOW
- Download action materials to spread the word and take action in your community for safer products
- Sign up for updates and join our Safe Cosmetics Action Network

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics is a coalition of public health, educational, faith, labor, women's, environmental and consumer groups. Our goal is to protect the health of consumers and workers by requiring the health and beauty industry to phase out the use of chemicals that are known or suspected carcinogens, mutagens and reproductive toxins.



Together we are working for safer products and smarter laws to protect our health and our families from toxic chemicals.

Founding groups of the campaign include: Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, The Breast Cancer Fund, Commonweal, Environmental Working Group, Free the Planet!, Friends of the Earth, Health Care Without Harm, National Environmental Trust, National

Black Environmental Justice Network,
Women's Voices for the Earth.

For More Information and To Get Involved:

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