

Make-Up Holds Hidden Danger of Cancer

By Amelia Hill

Women are being exposed to deadly diseases through the everyday use of common cosmetics bought over the counter. The growing list of synthetic ingredients manufacturers add to their products are turning the most innocent-looking shampoos and moisturizers into cocktails of toxins that could cause cancer over years of sustained use. These synthetic ingredients are inexpensive, stable and have a long shelf-life. Manufacturers love them, but although the majority of products appear safe in the short run the results from long-term use could be deadly. Modern cosmetics contain a host of dubious ingredients that would be more at home in a test tube than on our faces. Coal tar colors, phenylenediamine, benzene, even formaldehyde, are just a few of the synthetic chemicals commonly included in shampoos, skin creams and blushes - toxins which are absorbed into your skin with every use.' There is no question that people are being damaged by their cosmetics. How can they not be? So many things are put into cosmetics now that are carcinogenic and it is allowed because cosmetics are not considered to be as serious as drugs or food. The adverse effects of toxins is compounded over decades, confusing hormone receptors and slowly altering cell structure. Chemicals are transmitted into the bloodstream in a number of ways: powders have the least absorption, while oily solutions or those designed to increase moisture allow more of the chemical to be absorbed. Eye makeup can be absorbed by the highly sensitive mucous membranes. Hair sprays, perfumes and dusting powders can be inhaled, irritating the lungs. Lipstick is often chewed off and swallowed. The United Nations Environmental Program estimates that approximately 70,000 chemicals are in common use across the world with 1,000 new chemicals being introduced every year. Of all the chemicals used in cosmetics, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health has reported that nearly 900 are toxic - although other groups attack that figure as being far too conservative. Compared to the toxins found in our air, soil and waterways, cosmetics seem a trivial pursuit to many environmental health and consumer advocacy groups. But many of the same poisons that pollute our environment, from dioxins to petrochemicals, can be found in the jars and bottles that line our bathroom shelves. It is too early to know with certainty how serious the long-term impact could be on health, but warns that hormone-disrupting chemicals may lurk in cosmetics which could lower immunity to disease and cause neurological and reproductive damage. 'Many of these same ingredients have been found to cause cancer in laboratory animals,' she said. 'At best, a visit to your neighborhood cosmetic counter could result in allergies, irritations and sensitivities.'

The Observer April 7, 2002

Dr. Mercola's Comments:

It is very clear that women seem to be predisposed to far more autoimmune disorders than men. Other problems like thyroid disease and fibromyalgia are also far more common in women. Perhaps one of the major contributing factors is the fact that women tend to use cosmetics and men don't. As this study points out, many of the chemicals in cosmetics are quite toxic. If you are a woman and are not aware of this important issue yet, please focus more attention on the chemicals you put on your body. They can have a major influence on your health. If you are a patient in my clinic, we have a new nutritionist in our office, Darcey. She has special training and expertise and can help guide you in your selection of non-toxic cosmetics.< span>

The Hidden Danger in Lotions and Sunscreens

Many consumers have long known their favorite lotions and sunscreens contained parabens, or synthetic chemicals used as preservatives. But with more and more products being touted as "paraben-free," many are now wondering, "What, exactly, are parabens, and are they dangerous?" Parabens, which inhibit the growth of bacteria, yeast, and molds, have been used in personal-care products like shampoos, conditioners, deodorants, and sunscreens for years, allowing these products to survive for months, or years, during shipping and on store shelves.

Studies have now shown that parabens mimic the activity of the hormone estrogen, which is associated with certain forms of breast cancer. *Organic Consumers Association September 4, 2007*

Dr. Mercola's Comments:

Parabens are one of the most commonly used ingredients in personal care products. The only ingredient used more frequently is water. You can find them in:

Shampoos and conditioners, Creams and lotions, deodorants and antiperspirants, Sunscreens, Cosmetics.

But, did you know they are also present in many prepared foods, like mayonnaise, mustard, salad dressings, and candy? You can identify them on the label, where they may be listed as:

methyl paraben, ethyl paraben, propyl paraben, butyl paraben, isobutyl paraben, E216.

Studies have shown that parabens can affect your body much like estrogens, which can lead to diminished muscle mass, extra fat storage, and male gynecomastia (breast growth). Other studies have also linked parabens to breast cancer, as researchers found traces of parabens in every sample of tissue taken from 20 different breast tumors.

The EPA has linked methyl parabens in particular to metabolic, developmental, hormonal, and neurological disorders, as well as various cancers.

Would it surprise you to find out that more than a third of personal care products contain ingredients linked to cancer? Cancer rates continue to rise, yet of the nearly 4,000,000 synthetic chemicals in your environment, less than one percent of these are known well enough to be able to ascertain their safety. This is a major concern. For example, the Environmental Working Group found that only 28 common cosmetics and toiletries out of 7,500 had all of their ingredients fully tested for safety.

It's important to recognize that whatever you put on your skin is readily absorbed into your bloodstream where it can potentially cause some serious damage to your body. If you want to learn more about the potential toxicity of your cosmetics, I urge you to review the EWG's extensive "Skin Deep Report."

To keep yourself safe, switch over to natural cleaning products and natural brands of toiletries, including shampoo, toothpaste, antiperspirants, and cosmetics.

Some suggestions for healthier, natural alternatives include:

Deodorant -- A pinch of baking soda mixed into water is an effective all-day deodorant. Common soap and water work just fine too.

Shampoo and Soaps -- You can find clean, non-chemical soaps at many health food stores. To make better shampoos, you can add a little rosemary oil..

Skin softener -- A bit of coconut oil works great as an all over moisturizer.

Beware, however, that there are no federal certifications or official guidelines for beauty products, so anyone can claim their product is natural or organic. Some "organic" beauty products actually contain only a single-digit percentage of organic ingredients!

Truly organic personal care products do not contain preservatives, however they may contain natural antimicrobial and antifungal ingredients like grapefruit seed extract, or antioxidant vitamins (A, C and E), which come with all the benefits of a preservative, but none of the dangerous side effects.

There is no question that the beauty products you use on a daily basis can harm you, and the adverse effects of toxins are compounded over decades, so choose wisely, and read the labels.

<http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2008/04/05/carcinogens-found-in-quot-organic-quot-personal-care-products.aspx>

Carcinogens Found in "Organic" Personal Care Products

A new study commissioned by the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) found that many leading "natural" and "organic" brand shampoos, body washes, and lotions contain the carcinogenic contaminant 1,4-Dioxane.

1,4-Dioxane is considered a chemical "known to the State of California to cause cancer." It is a byproduct of the cancer-causing petrochemical Ethylene Oxide, which is used as part of a short-cut process called Ethoxylation, which makes harsh ingredients milder.

1,4-Dioxane is also suspected of being a kidney toxicant, neurotoxicant and respiratory toxicant, among others, according to the California EPA. It is also a leading groundwater contaminant.

Some of the leading organic and natural brands found to contain 1,4-Dioxane include: **JASON Pure Natural & Organics, Giovanni Organic Cosmetics, Kiss My Face, Nature's Gate Organics**

To avoid 1,4-dioxane, OCA recommends reading ingredient labels and avoiding products with indications of ethoxylation, which include: "myreth," "oleth," "laureth," "cetareth," any other "eth," "PEG," "polyethylene," "polyethylene glycol," "polyoxyethylene," or "oxynol," in ingredient names.

Sources: Organic Consumers Association March 14, 2008

Dr. Mercola's Comments:

I know you may be tempted to throw up your hands in dismay that even your natural and "organic" soaps, body lotions, cosmetics, and shampoos may be harmful, but there are some safe personal care products on the market.

And once you know what to look for, and perhaps more importantly, what to avoid, finding them is not that difficult.

Beware of "Greenwashed" Personal Care Products

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not require companies to test their personal care products for safety. What this means is that anyone can throw together a medley of chemicals, add a bit of synthetic fragrance, and call it a body lotion. Yes, this is also true for products that are labeled "natural" and even "organic."

Now let me say this again: cosmetics and their ingredients do not have to undergo any type of approval process before hitting store shelves, and the terms "natural" and "organic" have no definitions. In other words, when it comes to cosmetics labeling, it's a free for all.

Some products may include a few organic ingredients, for instance, along with several chemical ones -- and still claim to be natural or organic on the label.

Of course, organic personal care items have been all the rage recently, and sales of organic personal care items reached \$350 million in 2007, increasing 24 percent from 2005.

But if you read Tuesday's newsletter, then you know that giant corporations are often behind popular organic products. And many of these products are greenwashed to make them appear natural and healthy on the outside, when in reality they contain synthetic ingredients that can harm your health, like 1,4-Dioxane.

Ingredients to AVOID in Your Personal Care Products

You wouldn't knowingly rub a bunch of chemicals on your skin, would you? Well, that's often what happens every day when people slather on lotion, apply makeup or wash their hair. Is using a typical body lotion for a day going to kill you? Well, of course not.

But every product that you put on your body gets absorbed directly into your bloodstream. And over time these chemicals add a significant burden to your body, and that burden can manifest into disease.

So when choosing your personal care products, keep in mind that the ingredients should be safe enough to eat, since that is essentially what you are doing when you apply something onto your skin.

Yet, even if you did happen to eat these chemicals, your digestive system can produce specific enzymes to break down these toxins and excrete them ... something that doesn't readily occur when you absorb them through your skin. So you really do need to be careful.

The only way to be sure of what's in your personal care products is to become familiar with which ingredients to avoid, and then check the labels of every product before you buy it. Here are some of the major ones that you will definitely want to avoid:

Paraben, a chemical found in underarm deodorants and other cosmetics that has been shown to mimic the action of the female hormone estrogen, which can drive the growth of human breast tumors.

Phthalates, plasticizing ingredients (present in nearly three-quarters of 72 products tested by the Environmental Working Group), which have been linked to birth defects in the reproductive system of boys and lower sperm-motility in adult men, among other problems.

Musks, used as fragrances, can accumulate in your body, and have been linked to skin irritation, hormone disruption, and cancer in laboratory studies.

Artificial fragrances, which are among the top five known allergens, and can cause asthma and trigger asthma attacks.

Methylisothiazolinone (MIT), a chemical used in shampoo to prevent bacteria from developing, which may have detrimental effects on your nervous system.

Toluene, made from petroleum or coal tar, and found in most synthetic fragrances. Chronic exposure linked to anemia, lowered blood cell count, liver or kidney damage, and may affect a developing fetus.

Mineral Oil, Paraffin, and Petrolatum, these products coat your skin like plastic, clogging pores and creating a build-up of toxins. They also slow cellular development, which can cause you to show earlier signs of aging, and are a suspected cause of cancer and disruption to hormonal activity.

This is only a sampling of the toxic ingredients that are out there. If you are wondering whether your favorite personal care products are safe, the Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep Cosmetic Safety Database allows you to look up a product and find out.

Or Better Yet, Use Only Products With Ingredients That You Can Read and Pronounce

This is probably the simplest way to find safe products out there. If it includes a lot of long, complex ingredient names, it's probably not safe.

Fortunately, your search for safe skin care may soon get a lot easier. I am proud to report that my team has been researching this topic extensively and we are getting very close to launching one of the best, most pure skin care product lines out there. It is truly effective, has absolutely no synthetic ingredients, and is packaged in brown glass bottles.

But for now, we're talking about your health here, so please do be choosy and only use products made of real, recognizable, natural and organic ingredients.