

Is It Poison?

9 TOXINS TO AVOID IN PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS

PARABENS: They're in adult and baby shampoo and many other products, and they are estrogen mimickers that can lead to cancer.

FRAGRANCE: The FDA requires that food, drug, and body care companies list their ingredients on their products—but chemicals used to scent products can be clumped under the vague term “fragrance.” Found in everything from shampoo to deodorant, a single product's secret fragrance mixture can contain potentially hundreds of toxic volatile organic compounds.

NANOPARTICLES: Found in lotions, moisturizers, make-up, and particularly sunscreen, these untested ingredients are so small, many scientists are very concerned about their potential health effects, as they can penetrate cell walls and are highly reactive. Products with nanoparticles aren't often labeled as such, so check your conventional body care products at CosmeticDatabase.org or NanotechProject.org/inventories/consumer/.

FORMALDEHYDE: A common hardener in nail polish and an ingredient in bath products, this chemical is a known carcinogen. Nail polish also often contains the developmental toxicant TOLUENE.

PHTHALATES: These hormone disruptors have been linked to male genital abnormalities, liver and kidney lesions, and higher rates of childhood asthma and allergies. They're often hidden in the fragrances of an array of products for men, women, and children, and listed as DIBUTYL PHTHALATE in nail polish.

PETROLEUM BY-PRODUCTS: Listed as mineral oil, petrolatum, liquid paraffin, toluene, or xylene, these chemicals are found in a dizzying number of products, including many shampoos and soaps. Of most concern is the fact that they are often contaminated by cancer-causing impurities like 1,4 DIOXANE, which is a probable carcinogen. Industry has done very little to prevent such contamination.

TRICLOSAN: A primary ingredient in anti-bacterial soaps and products, triclosan has been linked to hormone disruption and the emergence of bacteria-resistant “superbugs.”

LEAD: It's a potent neurotoxicant, and it's been found in several popular brands of lipstick and men's hair coloring kits.

MERCURY: A neurotoxicant that can severely damage human health, mercury—often listed as “thimerosal”—is still used in some cosmetics like mascara.

Stay safe:

Find safety ratings for your favorite products at CosmeticDatabase.org, and find the latest research on individual ingredients at Toxipedia.org.