



8 Chemicals to Avoid in Personal Care Products

- 1. Sodium Laurel Sulphate (sls)** — Acts as a penetration enhancer. This chemical alters the structure of the skin and allows chemicals to penetrate deep into the skin, increasing the amount of chemicals reaching the blood stream.
- 2. Parabens** — Used as a preservative. This chemical may impair fertility; alter hormone levels; increase risks for certain types of cancers; alter reproductive development, cause skin irritation, rashes, and allergic reactions; and some studies have found parabens in breast tumors.
- 3. Propylene Glycol** — This chemical acts as a penetration enhancer and keeps products from melting in high heat or freezing when it is cold. This chemical alters the structure of the skin by allowing chemicals to penetrate deep beneath it while increasing their ability to reach the blood stream. It can also be a skin irritant and cause allergic reactions.
- 4. Phthalates** — Industrial chemicals used as solvents and plasticizers in cosmetics. Phthalates can damage the liver, kidneys, and lungs and act as a reproductive toxin in males.
- 5. Oxybenzone** — most often found in sunscreen. Linked to allergies, hormone disruption and cell damage.
- 6. Cocamide DEA/Lauramide DEA** — An emulsifying agent in cosmetics and as a foaming and cleansing agent to improve how one's mouth feels. May contain impurities connected with certain types of cancers. After absorption through the skin, it can create carcinogenic compounds called nitrosamines. Insufficient toxicity data is available to determine the safety of the product when inhaled.
- 7. Petrolatum** — This is a petrochemical that forms a barrier on skin, making lipstick shine and creams smoother and skin softer. This chemical may contain harmful impurities that may break down into chemicals linked to cancer. It also may cause allergic reactions and other significant health problems. It is banned by the European Union.
- 8. Coal Tar Colors** — So-called coal-tar chemicals are found in many "FD&C" or "D&C" colors used in makeup and hair dye. FD&C Blue 1 and FD & C Green 3 are carcinogenic, and impurities in other colors — D&C Red 33, FD&C Yellow 5 and FD&C Yellow 6 — have been shown to cause cancer when applied to the skin.

Compiled by HMN Green Mama Team, May 2009

Sources:

Chemicals to Avoid in Everyday Personal Care Products - Healthy U, Northwestern Health Sciences University, www.nwhealth.edu

The Green Guide, Dirty Dozen SSC, Jan.04, www.thegreenguide.com