



# Are Your Cosmetics Safe?

## Important Information for Teens



### Ancient Beauty



For thousands of years, people have used cosmetics and other body care products to enhance their beauty and well-being. Ancient Egyptians applied fragrant oils and creams to soften their skin, and put on natural make-up created from plants and minerals. In today's world, there are thousands of body care products to choose from, and the average American teen uses between 10-25 personal care products a day! These items include toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, soap, lotion, antiperspirant, sunscreen, powder, mascara, lipstick, hair gel, nail polish and perfume.

### Daily Dose of Poison



Many of the products we use to make us clean or more attractive contain harmful or toxic chemicals that are bad for our health. We put these chemicals into our mouths, paint them onto our faces and rub them into our scalp and skin. Unfortunately, we are unknowingly poisoning ourselves!

On average, our bodies absorb more than 200 different chemicals found within personal care products. In fact, about 70% of the personal care products we use daily enter our bodies through a variety of ways. We may absorb these products through our skin (like when putting on lipstick or using deodorant); we may breathe them in (like when spraying hairspray or perfume); or, we may even swallow tiny amounts (like when brushing teeth or using teeth whiteners.)



### It All Adds Up



When a personal care product contains a toxic ingredient, it's usually only a small amount, so just wearing some perfume one day isn't going to harm our health. However, repeatedly putting on perfume in addition to the 10-25 other personal care products most teens use every day greatly increases exposure to harmful chemicals over a lifetime. All those chemical exposures add up or **accumulate** and negatively affect our health in the long run.

### Why are Bad Chemicals in Cosmetics?



The chemicals used in cosmetics have many different functions, and are used in other different products and applications. Although not all the chemicals are harmful to our health, many are. For example, **formaldehyde** is well known as a preservative in medical laboratories and as an embalming fluid used in corpses. But, it's also used in some nail polish as a disinfectant and a preservative. Unfortunately, formaldehyde can damage our DNA and is also suspected of causing cancer in humans.

**Toluene** is a chemical commonly used in paint thinner and industrial adhesives. Industrial products containing toluene generally are labeled with a warning to use the product under ventilated conditions and to prevent it from coming in contact with skin. Despite these warnings, this same chemical is surprisingly also used in many nail polishes and hair dyes that we put directly on our bodies. Toluene is potentially cancer causing and can cause liver damage. Yet, when was the last time you saw a warning label for toluene on your nail polish?

## Untested Chemicals—It's a Gamble



There are certain chemicals like formaldehyde and toluene that we know are hazardous to our health, yet they are still allowed in cosmetics. Equally alarming, is that there are thousands of

chemicals in cosmetics that we know nothing about! Independent research has shown that *one third* of all personal care products contain one or more poisonous ingredients classified as a possible cancer causing chemical or reproductive toxin.

### Why no Rules?



Despite the known dangers of certain chemicals, there is no health and safety testing for the chemicals found in our cosmetics and personal care products,

although the government regulates many other products we use every day. For example, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is responsible for protecting our health by assuring the safety of drugs. The FDA rigorously tests all drug products before they can be given to the public and makes sure that all drug producers label their products in specific ways. Unlike drugs however, there is no government agency that approves the safety of cosmetics and personal care products before they can be sold. As a result, cosmetic companies are able to put unlimited amounts of chemicals into personal care products with no required testing, monitoring of health effects, or adequate labels.

### Europe- Leading By Example



The European Union (E.U.) now bans more than 1,000 chemicals from cosmetics, because they may cause cancer, birth defects, or reproductive problems.

Alarmingly, just nine chemicals are banned from cosmetics in the United States. The E.U. has specific standards for cosmetic product labeling so that consumers know what

ingredients they are using. Unfortunately, there currently are no standards in the U.S. for cosmetics ingredient labeling.

### Forces of Change at Home



Despite the resistance of cosmetic companies, many people across the United States are working to make safe cosmetics a reality for everyone. In 2002 the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics was formed as a national

coalition of public health, educational, religious, labor, women's, environmental and consumer groups focused on phasing out the use of toxic chemicals in personal care products. You can learn more and get involved by visiting <http://www.safecosmetics.org>.

### Act Locally



Teens across the country are taking action by unmasking the truth behind poisonous personal care products. There are many things you can do within your community to help spread the word about safe cosmetics.

Educate your peers and family and raise awareness about our right to good health; contact cosmetic companies directly and ask them to replace toxic ingredients with safer alternatives; or write a letter to your local government official urging them to support any safe cosmetics legislation.

### Your Right to a Healthy Body



Toxic industrial chemicals do not belong in cosmetics or in our bodies. Protect your health and minimize the amount of poisons you are exposed to from cosmetics.

Read ingredient labels on cosmetics and personal care products. Learn more about the products you use by visiting <http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/>