

The Ugly Truth About Commercial Cosmetics

I believe most of us take for granted that the popular cosmetics, soaps, lotions and hair care products we buy in our local salons, drug and department stores are safe. **Why as consumers would we be able to buy and use a product on our skin, lips, eyes and hair every day if they were harmful?** This wasn't even a question I had ever asked myself because I was so confident in my products and the well known companies that produce them. I first began investigating cosmetics when I decided to start my own cosmetic company. When I first began investigating the ingredients in my makeup and shower products like soap and shampoo, I was shocked to discover that almost all of them contained not one or two but multiple hard to pronounce, synthetic, very dangerous chemicals.

Over 90% of all ingredients in commercially available cosmetics are of synthetic origin and directly linked to serious health risks like cancer, infertility, kidney and liver disease and severe skin issues. Environmental Working Group report called, **"Skin Deep"** found that almost 90 percent of the more than 10,000 ingredients used in personal care products have not been evaluated by government regulators. At the same time of the 20,000 different off-the-shelf cosmetic products that are for sale in the US and Canada, over 80% of the products surveyed contained one or more ingredients that have caused documented adverse reactions in humans and animals in the past.

The FDA has only banned or restricted only *nine* personal care product ingredients in its entire 67 year history (FDA 2000). On September 6, 1997 the Boston Globe reported that "The General Accounting Office, the investigative branch of Congress, has identified more than 125 cosmetic ingredients suspected of causing cancer- and others that may cause birth defects."! Many of the harmful chemicals still used abundantly in cosmetics in the United States and Canada have been long banned in the rest of the world's countries. Unfortunately, the United States and Canada regulatory vacuum gives cosmetic companies incredible leeway to select, manufacture and sell products laden with questionable ingredients, leaving the consumer to ultimately suffer the consequences.

Most of the large cosmetic and personal-care companies will tell you not to worry. They agree that there are many chemicals in their products, but say that the quantities are small and will not affect you. At first glance this seems reasonable. Unfortunately, this is a sugar coated public relations response and does not identify the true issue at hand. Medical science has proven that humans exposed over time to very small quantities of harmful chemicals do indeed suffer the consequences.

Medical science has proven that even the thin patches we stick to our arms or stomach with very small amounts of pharmaceutical chemicals can very effectively deliver chemicals into the bloodstream, totally changing the body's chemistry. Transdermal patches containing small traces of nicotine can effectively deliver chemicals directly into the bloodstream to alter tobacco cravings. The new contraceptive alternative to the "Pill" is a patch which contains very low levels of hormones and *still* has the ability to stop a woman from getting pregnant.

The real motivation behind the Cosmetic Industry's disconcert is money and profit. Chemicals, dyes and fillers mentioned below are found in almost every cosmetic

product because they can be manufactured incredibly inexpensively and have a very long shelf life. If they were to discontinue using these chemicals for more healthy alternatives they would be severely cutting their profit margins to give you chemical free beauty products. In this battle their profits supersede your health. As a consumer your only response should be to discontinue using their products.

Large corporations in the personal-care industry are only motivated to be interested in their profits because the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not regulate or require any kind of federal, unbiased testing before a cosmetic or personal-care product hit the shelves. The FDA leaves it up to the cosmetics manufactures to test their own products. In essence, YOU the consumer are the Commercial Cosmetic Industry's guinea pig. No wonder virtually none of them need to test on animals anymore! The consumer is now the guinea pig of choice!

Currently, the cosmetic companies in North America alone generate over \$30 billion in sales each year. Advertising through celebrities, slick magazine and TV ads, they give hope for a brighter, younger complexion, more beautiful hair and sexier features. What they don't mention is the long list of chemicals that go into that promise. Since the industry is not regulated, many cosmetic companies don't even bother to list the ingredients on their products.

It is concerning then, in light of all the information we know about the chemicals in the products that we slather on our skin EVERY DAY, that we are not more informed and outraged about the implications of constantly introducing these chemicals into our bodies.

Little is known about the long term effects of the petroleum chemicals and synthetic products that we rub into our skin on a daily basis in the form of cosmetics, lotions, shampoos, etc. At this point scientists and researchers know that these chemicals pose a threat to human health and fertility and have been found in our bodies and breast milk. Chemicals found in cosmetics and personal-care products are linked to birth defects, hormone disruption and reduced fertility not to mention more pervasive cosmetic damage such as rashes, mild to severe acne and eczema. Many people use cosmetics and lotions to cure skin issues. Ironically, the products they are using and hoping for a cure are the very same products that are causing the problem!

Even after reading all of this I'm sure you are still thinking, "I doubt the products I use every day have the chemicals you are talking about." I thought the same thing until I looked into the research of a few different sources like the **Environmental Working Group**. I had to resort to these research groups since most of my cosmetics don't list the ingredients anywhere on the packaging. I soon found out that some of my (formerly) favorite cosmetic companies were rated among the worst for toxin levels in their cosmetics.

For more details about the specific chemicals of concern, please visit the **Environmental Working Group's** website. Please keep in mind, the EWG did not test every cosmetic company's products for this study. If the products you currently use are not mentioned please investigate your cosmetic's ingredient list.

The following products are only a sample of some of the most common products in your cosmetics, hair and skin care products. All are extremely hazardous to your skin. We have only begun to understand the long-term effects of these ingredients.

DIBUTYL PHTHALATE: Prohibited for use in cosmetics in the European Union. Possible human reproductive or developmental toxin. Considered an endocrine disruptor and found in nail polish, perfume and hair spray.

LEAD ACETATE: Known human reproductive and developmental toxin. Prohibited for use in cosmetics in the European Union. Found in some hair dyes and cleansers. Stay away from this product.

TOULENE: Possible human reproductive or developmental toxin. May contain harmful impurities or breakdown products. Found in some nail polish. Stay away from this product.

PETROLEUM DISTILLATES: Possible human carcinogen. May contain harmful impurities or "break-down products". Prohibited for use in cosmetics in the European Union. Found in some mascaras, perfumes, foundations, lipsticks and lip balms. Stay away from this product.

ETHYLACRYLATE: Unsafe according to the International Fragrance Association. Possible human carcinogen. Skin sensitizer. Found in some mascara. Stay away from this product.

COAL TAR: Known human carcinogen. Prohibited for use in cosmetics in the European Union. May contain harmful impurities or breakdown products. Found in dandruff shampoos, nati-itch creams and hair dyes. Stay away from this product.

MINERAL OIL: A petroleum derivative that seals in moisture and breaks down skin oils and makeup. Often found in lipstick, lotions and makeup removers. Some forms of mineral oil have been linked to cancer, skin and eye irritation. Mineral oil also clogs pores because it does not allow the skin to breathe or release toxins. By inhibiting the skin from breathing and releasing toxins, mineral oil slows down the skin function and normal cell development causing the skin to prematurely age. Stay away from this product. Stay away from this product.

PETROLAUM (mineral oil jelly): A petroleum derivative common in lip balms. Petrolatum clogs skin from taking in oxygen and releasing toxins. Highly acne producing, it can cause both sun sensitivity and chapping. Incredibly cheap for manufactures. Stay away from this product.

METHYL PROPYL BUYTL and ETHYL PARABEN: Used as preservatives to inhibit microbial growth to extend products' shelf life. May cause allergic reactions and rashes. Contain highly toxic formaldehyde-releasing ingredients which are carcinogenic, increasing the risk of cancer in both men and women. Stay away from this product.

SYNTHETIC FRAGRANCES: Used in most cosmetics and cleaning products. Synthetic fragrances can contain hundreds of chemicals. Unfortunately, due to the lack of regulation almost all labels usually only identify chemicals as "fragrance". Many cosmetics don't even bother to say "fragrance" at all. Synthetic fragrances

cause headaches, dizziness, rashes, coughing, vomiting, skin irritations, etc. Hydrocarbons such as formaldehyde, styrene, toluene and phenol can cause depression, exhaustion, anxiety, dizziness, diminished blood flow and brain damage. Stay away from these product.

RETINYL PALMITATE: A topical form of Vitamin A derivative. It is listed on the Health Canada Product Safety Bureau's Hit List as TOXIC.

SODIUM LAURYL (LAURETH) SULFATE (SLS or SLES): Holds oil and water together and acts as a detergent causing your products to foam. One of SLS's original uses was as an industrial garage floor cleaner. Now used in cosmetics and personal-care products as a wetting agent which makes suds extremely well. Incredibly inexpensive and added to everything from shampoos, toothpastes, bubble baths and lotions. Extremely irritating, SLS causes skin irritations, itchiness, cracking (from dishwashing soap), dandruff and infections in children (from bubble bath). SLS has also caused corneal damage to animals. It creates nitrates in the body when mixed with other common chemicals in cosmetics, ultimately producing known or suspected carcinogens. SLS penetrates incredibly easily especially in shampoos, entering the body through the large hair follicles on the head. The national Toxicology Program classifies it as a skin and eye irritant. Avoid this product.

TALC (Magnesium Silicate): a natural mineral found and lung irritant, Talc is a slippery, finely powdered mineral that absorbs moisture. It is widely used in makeup and body powders. Talc has been linked to ovarian and lung cancer. It is NOT biodegradable. Talc has caused babies to severely cough, induced vomiting and pneumonia. Stay away from this product.

DEA (Diethanolamine), MEA (Monoethanolamine), TEA (Triethanolamine): three are hormone-disrupting chemicals and form cancer-causing agents. They are commonly found in bubble baths (in which we relax and soak for long periods), shampoos, soaps and facial cleansers. They are easily absorbed by the skin, and research indicates a strong link to liver and kidney cancer. There is also evidence that carcinogens form when Cocamide DEA (a cleanser, thickener and foam booster) is applied to the skin.

FORMALDEHYDE : Widely used in cosmetics as a germicide, preservative and fungicide. Formaldehyde is very often in cosmetics and not listed as an ingredient. It is also found in soaps, nail hardeners, lipsticks, body lotions and shampoos. Formaldehyde is suspected as a powerful carcinogenic and mutagenic, damaging and inhibiting the repair of DNA. Despite all evidence of negative implications of use, Formaldehyde is still widely in the US . Banned in Sweden and Japan . Stay away from this product.

QUATERNIUM-15: used as a preservative in cosmetics and toiletry items, as well as skin moisturizers and hair care products. It commonly causes allergic reactions and dermatitis, and breaks down into formaldehyde (see above).

IMIDAZOLIDINYL UREA and DIAZOLIDINYL UREA: both are very common in cosmetic preservatives after the parabens. IU and DU are often found in baby shampoos, lotions and creams. IU and DU are also known to cause dermatitis (inflammation of the skin) according to the American Academy of Dermatology. Also may cause joint pain, allergies, depression, headaches, chest pain, ear infections,

chronic fatigue, dizziness, loss of sleep, or even function as asthma triggers. Serious side effects include the weakening of the immune system, and, as usual, cancer. Stay away from this product.

ISOPROPYL ALCOHOL: petroleum derived, and is used in antifreeze and shellac. Side effects are headache, dizziness, mental depression, nausea, vomiting, and coma. It is commonly found in hair color rinses, body rubs, hand lotion and aftershave lotions. It penetrates the skin easily and is thought to destroy intestinal flora, leaving your body's major organs open to parasites, and thus to cancers. Considered by the petroleum industry as an "industrial byproduct" (read: industrial waste).

ARTIFICIAL COLORS: Generally referred to on labels as "FD and C" followed by the color. These colors are coal-tar derivatives and NOT plant-based. FD and C Red No. 6 and Green No. 6 are suspected of causing cancer. Stay away from ALL artificial colors.

If you're thinking you will simply start buying cosmetics that say "organic", "natural", "hypo-allergenic" or "herbal" to avoid these dangerous chemicals please beware. Products with these labels still often contain these dangerous chemicals, minerals and synthetics because there is no regulation or standard that companies who label their products are required to follow. That and a company is aloud to call their products Natural and Organic as long as they have atleast 1 Natural or Organic ingredient. No matter how small of an amount... Read the ingredients!!!!

The typical adult uses nine cosmetics/ personal-care products a day with an average daily load of around 126 chemicals. Most of these chemicals (including the one's mentioned above) are absorbed into your body through your skin. Others, found in lipstick and lip balm, you actually eat as they come off your lips when eating, drinking or wetting your lips.

Cosmetic companies use synthetics and fillers in their products to keep costs down and give themselves the greatest profit margin possible. They are spending pennies on the dollars you spend at your local drug or department store to buy their products. What you are paying for is an image of beauty perpetuated in advertisements. You are not usually paying for quality with most commercial cosmetic brands.

What can you do to save your skin and your body from exposure to a lifetime of harmless chemicals? Inform yourself, read labels, investigate products if they don't list ingredients. There are natural alternatives that are better for you and your skin.

LUVU Beauty provides you with beautiful, 100% safe cosmetic alternatives. None of our cosmetics contain ANY harmful ingredients like the ones mentioned above.

Sources:

Health Risks in Today's Cosmetics, Alliance Publishers, 1995

A Consumer's Dictionary of Cosmetic Ingredients, Ruth Winter

Beauty to Die For, The Cosmetic Consequence by Judi Vance

Perfume Expose, Richard H. Conrad, Ph.D.

Cosmetics Unmasked by Dr. Stephen & Gina Antczak

Health Risks in Today's Cosmetics, Niklaus J Smeh

The Safe Shoppers Bible, David Steinman, Dr. S. Epstein

Don't Go to the Cosmetic Counter Without Me, Paula Begoun 4th Edition

Interesting Links Related to the Topic of Safe Cosmetics:

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics

Environmental Working Group's Report: "Skin Deep"

Environmental Working Group's Report: Lists of popular beauty products ranked according to their dangerous ingredients and potential risks