



PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS SAFETY ACT WOULD IMPROVE COSMETICS SAFETY

Personal care products are largely unregulated. The FDA does not even require safety testing of ingredients in personal care products before they are used:

- Ingredients commonly used in personal care products have been linked to cancer, harm to the reproductive system in both men and women and severe allergies, among other health effects.
- FDA monitors people's exposures to chemicals in food and drugs much more closely. In contrast to cosmetics, the agency requires that ingredients in drugs be tested for safety before they are marketed.
- Despite the risks posed by modern personal care products, the federal law designed to ensure that they are safe has remained largely unchanged since 1938.

Men, women and children are all exposed to potentially risky chemicals in personal care products every day:

- Personal care products, called "cosmetics" in the law, are much more than makeup and fragrance – they include lotion, toothpaste, body wash, shampoo, deodorant and many other products that people use daily.
- On average, women use 12 personal care products a day, exposing themselves to 168 chemical ingredients. Men use six, exposing themselves to 85 unique chemicals.

The Personal Care Products Safety Act would reform regulation of personal care products, requiring companies to ensure that their products are safe before marketing them and giving FDA the tools it needs to protect the public.

- The act would empower FDA to review the safety of ingredients:
 - Each year, the agency would do a safety review of five ingredients and contaminants that may pose health risks. At the outset, these would include formaldehyde-releasing chemicals and a long-chained paraben, which have both been linked to harm to human health.
- The act would give FDA the same tools for ensuring the safety of personal care products as it uses to regulate food and drugs:
 - Manufacturers would be required to ensure that products are made safely and in a clean environment. FDA could inspect factories and records.
 - FDA could stop companies that sell dangerous products and seek out any that are already on the market.
 - FDA could require recalls of dangerous products, which it currently cannot do.

SOME INGREDIENTS IN PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE SAFE

Formaldehyde releasers

These chemicals react with water to generate small amounts of formaldehyde, a preservative. They are added to some products to prevent mold and bacteria from growing. Formaldehyde is a potent allergen and is classified as a carcinogen by the Department of Health and Human Services and the World Health Organization. Formaldehyde releasers include DMDM hydantoin, imidazolidinyl urea, diazolidinyl urea and quaternium-15. Where do you find them? Shampoos, conditioners, bubble bath and other personal care products – even those intended for children.

Parabens

Parabens are also used as preservatives. So-called “long-chained” parabens – propylparaben, isopropylparaben, butylparaben and isobutylparaben – can act as estrogens in the body and disrupt hormone signaling. A recent study by scientists at the Harvard School of Public Health linked propyl paraben to impaired fertility in women.

Phthalates

Scientific studies have linked phthalate exposure to reproductive abnormalities in baby boys, reduced testosterone and sperm quality in men and early puberty in girls. Animal experiments confirm that they are toxic to the reproductive system. Such concerns led some manufacturers reformulate products such as nail polish, but in 2012 California regulators found high levels of dibutyl phthalate even in some of the nail polishes that claimed to be phthalate-free.

Retinyl palmitate and retinoic acid

Retinoic acid is used in anti-aging skin creams. Retinyl palmitate, a related chemical, is added to roughly one-quarter of the sunscreens in EWG’s Guide to Sunscreens database. Government scientists have found that these chemicals speed the development of cancerous lesions on sun-exposed skin. People who go out in the sun wearing creams or sunscreens that contain retinyl palmitate may be at increased risk of skin cancer.

Hair straighteners containing formaldehyde or formaldehyde-like chemicals

Although the industry’s own scientific advisory board has warned against formaldehyde-based hair straighteners, some contain as much as 10 percent pure formaldehyde. The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration has issued warnings and fines to numerous salons that use them, exposing their workers to intense and potentially cancer-causing fumes. Some nations have banned formaldehyde-based hair straighteners, but several small companies persist in marketing them in the United States.

Lead acetate in men’s hair dye

Lead acetate used in some men’s hair dyes, such as “Grecian Formula” products, can increase lead levels in the body. Because lead is a potent neurotoxin, lead acetate has been banned in hair dyes in Canada and the European Union.

Adapted from a January 2014 blog, “Chemicals That Should Disappear From Cosmetics,” by EWG Senior Scientist Johanna Congleton, <http://www.ewg.org/enviroblog/2014/01/chemicals-should-disappear-cosmetics>.