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what's in your body care products?

by michele geracoulis

a user-friendly guide to decoding product labels

By now we all know the ills of eating processed and junk food. But did you know that what we put on our body is just as important as what we put in it? The body's burden may actually be more intense from skin absorption than from ingestion. Because skin is extremely permeable, chemicals applied topically will eventually find their way to the bloodstream.

While exposure to just one chemicalized product alone is unlikely to do damage, repeated exposure to one or many just might. It's the aggregate exposure that can lead to health issues. Today many

of the personal care and cosmetic products on the commercial market contain an inordinate amount of deleterious chemicals.

The FDA does not monitor the manufacturing of beauty products. Companies are not required to do any sort of safety testing before a product hits the marketplace. Nor are they required to verify their advertising claims. Subsequently, if the label says natural, pure, safe, hypoallergenic, fragrance-free, dermatologist tested, dermatologist approved, cruelty-free or organic, it oftentimes isn't. Before you buy another product, learn to read the labels.

Ingredients	Derived From	Commonly Found In	Used For	Harmful Properties
Hydrolyzed Animal Protein & Hydrolyzed Collagen	Waste animal carcasses (including slaughterhouse remains and euthenized animals) rendered in boiling water	Soaps, shampoos, conditioners, hair styling products, hair color, lotions and cosmetics	Helps skin and hair retain moisture and to adds shine and body to hair	Antibiotics, hormones, vaccines, pesticides, pharmaceuticals or diseases that the animals were exposed to are all included in the final commodity. Animal rendering factories are notorious for releasing pollutants into the air and nearby water supply.
Sodium Lauryl / Laureth Sulfate	Petroleum, or lauric acid, from coconuts that is compounded with sodium hydroxide, AKA lye (often labeled "natural" with the phrase "comes from coconuts")	Bar soaps, liquid cleansers, shampoos, conditioners and toothpastes	Foaming qualities	Skin, scalp and eye irritants, and suspected as a gastrointestinal and liver toxicant. The bigger issue is that SLS may be contaminated with 1,4 Dioxin, which is carcinogenic.
1, 4 Dioxane	Petroleum	Personal care products—including baby bath. A contaminant, not an intentionally added ingredient, 1,4-Dioxane never appears on an ingredient label	Lather	Dioxane is absorbed through the skin or via the respiratory system when inhaled. It is classified by the EPA as a carcinogen.
Cocamide DEA	Made by reacting fatty acids in coconut oils with diethanolamine, which then has the potential to react with sodium nitrate or nitrate oxides to create carcinogenic compounds	Shampoos, cleansers, bubble baths, scalp treatments, exfoliant scrubs, sunscreens, hair colors and cosmetics	Lather	A possible carcinogen
Formaldehyde (Formalin)	Chemical compound	Nail polish, nail treatments, cosmetics, deodorants and disinfectants	Preservative	Formaldehyde is a known carcinogen, respiratory and eye irritant, and skin allergen. It is destructive to the environment.
Dibutyl Phthalate (DBP)	Petroleum	Nail polish and perfumes (hidden in the word "fragrance")	Penetration enhancer	DBPs are known to disrupt normal hormonal processes and have been found to cause a wide range of birth defects.
Parabens (Methyl, Propyl, Isobutyl, Benzyl, Ethyl, Butyl)	Chemical compound	Shampoos, conditioners, hair styling products, lotions, soaps, bubble baths and bath salts, deodorants, shaving creams, sunscreens and cosmetics	Preservative	These chemical preservatives are "estrogenic" (mimics the function of naturally occurring estrogen) and disruptive to normal hormone function. Exposure to external estrogens has been shown to increase risk of certain cancers.



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Imidazolidinyl Urea and Diazolidinyl Urea	Chemical compound	Shampoos, conditioners, hair styling products, lotions, bubble baths, bath salts, deodorants and cosmetics	Preservative	Skin irritants, capable of initiating an immune system response that includes itching, burning, scaling, hives and blistering. Probable carcinogen.
Hexachlorophene (HCP)	Chemical compound	Cosmetics and hospital germicidal scrubs	Antiseptic and preservative	Known carcinogen. Highly irritating to eyes, skin and the respiratory system.
Butylated hydroxianisole (BHA) & Butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT)	Synthetic chemicals	Cosmetics and personal care products	Preservative	Eye, skin and respiratory irritants. May also cause kidney and liver damage, and may weaken the immune system. Probable carcinogens.
Phenoxyethanol	Synthetic chemicals	Cosmetics, lotions, ointments, baby wipes, eardrops and vaccines	Preservative	Known to cause allergic reactions to the skin on contact
Petrolatum (petroleum jelly)	Petroleum	Cosmetics and personal care products	Emollient qualities	Suffocating to the skin, petrolatum prevents skin from performing its natural cycle of breathing and eliminating. Carries a risk of contamination with toxic impurities, some of which are linked to cancer.
Mineral Oil	Petroleum	Body moisturizers, cosmetics, hair treatments and colors, hair-styling gels and sunscreens	Lubricant	Irritating to skin and eyes. The topical use of mineral oil accelerates free, radical damage to the skin and is thought to be detrimental to the immune system.
Propylene Glycol	Petroleum	Liquid soaps, shampoo, conditioner, lotions, hair styling products, cosmetics and deodorants	Penetration enhancer, lather and humectant	Neurotoxin that is damaging to the liver and kidneys. Also acts as an allergen that triggers contact dermatitis.
Talc / Talcum Powder	Minerals	Cosmetics, body powders, baby powders and bar soaps	Softness and ability to absorb oil and moisture. Gives powdered cosmetics their consistency and slippery quality.	The International Agency for Research on Cancer considers talc a carcinogen.
FD & C Dyes	Coal tar	Permanent hair colors and anti-dandruff shampoos	Adds pigment to hair. Coal tar in shampoo eases dandruff.	Probable carcinogens. Can cause headaches, allergic reactions and asthma attacks
Toluene	Coal tar	Nail polish	Helps polish go on smoothly and adhere evenly to the nails	Strong skin, eye and respiratory irritant. Known as a neurotoxin and possible carcinogen.
Heavy Metals: Lead (Lead Acetate) & Mercury (Thimerosal)	Metallic elements found in the periodic table	Cosmetics and hair coloring	Coloring agent and preservative	Developmental and reproductive toxin. Easily absorbed by the skin and has a tendency to accumulate in the body. Can cause skin irritations on contact and allergic and neurotoxic reactions.
Triclosan	Pharmaceutically derived, classified as a drug by the FDA	Liquid soaps, deodorants, hand sanitizers, cosmetics, and skin care treatments	Antibacterial agent	May promote antibiotic resistance, cause skin and eye irritation, and disrupt hormones in humans.
Stearic & Palmitic Acid	Synthetically derived or obtained from animal or vegetable fats	Soaps and cosmetics	Hardens soaps and candles	May cause acne, and are known as skin, eye and respiratory irritants.