

Hazards in the Home

Body Care - Cosmetics

The cosmetics and toiletries industry use around 6-8,000 ingredients.¹ Up to 20% of these can cause health problems,² but for reasons of commercial secrecy manufacturers do not have to list them all on their product labels. The Government has bowed to the £250 billion chemical industry which is fighting tighter restrictions.¹

Fragrances

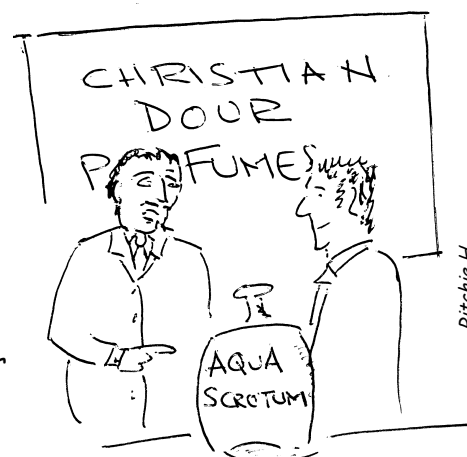
- A third of all allergies are caused by fragrances.¹
- In addition to fragrance, perfumes sometimes contain cruelly-derived ingredients from animals.
- The perfume may also have been made from flowers picked using child labour in the Third World (where many cheaper essential oils are sourced).¹

Cosmetics

- Products may contain mineral oil, formaldehyde and PVP* plastic - which are all suspected carcinogens.¹
- Lipsticks may be of particular concern, since it is easier to ingest substances in them on food or by licking your lips.¹
- Parabens (which may encourage cancer cells to grow) are preservatives widely used in cosmetics and in some food products. They have been found to mimic the female hormone oestrogen.¹

Deodorants and anti-perspirants

- These involve continually putting chemicals on your skin and they have raised concerns about cancer and Alzheimers.² Aerosols put chemicals into the air as well. Aerosol propellants include, ammonia, formaldehyde, triclosan and aluminium chlorhydrate.³
- Parabens (see above) Look out for methyl, ethyl, propyl, butyl or isobutyl paraben on labels. Parabens are also found in moisturisers, perfumes, shampoo and shower gels.¹



"Our secret ingredient is the pubic hair of the Natterjack toad."



The danger of phthalates

Phthalates (pronounced thalates) are mainly used in the chemical industry to soften plastics, but are added to nail varnish to make it dry evenly. They're also present in make-up, shampoos, deodorants and sunscreen.

They first hit the headlines when they were banned in the European Community for use in teething rings and toys designed for children to chew on, after it was found children were ingesting the chemicals. US scientists have shown that phthalates can pass into the bloodstream and enter the womb where they may disrupt male genital development. Phthalates are also suspected of encouraging certain cancers.¹

Alternatives

Deodorants stop the natural function of the body by clogging up your pores preventing you getting rid of toxins by sweating them out. An alternative is

bicarbonate of soda (baking powder)⁴

Moisturisers and conditioners

Skin-care experts say we overuse moisturisers. They're supposed to keep moisture in and protect our skin from environmental pollution. But skin has its own way of doing both these things. If you eat a healthy diet and drink plenty of water, skin and hair, to a large extent, look after themselves. Olive oil is good for dry skin.

Perfumes and flavours

Essential oils provide non-toxic fragrances that can be used to scent shampoo, bath soaks, or even, in the case of peppermint, to flavour toothpaste.³

*Polyvinylpyrrolidone

Sources of Information

1. Ethical Consumer Magazine (issues 47,64 7 67). www.ethicalconsumer.org
2. The Liverpool Echo (26.2.00)
3. Gary A Davis & Em Turner *Safe Substitutes at Home: Non-toxic household Products*, EnviroSense, <http://es.epa.gov/techinfo/facts/safe-fs>
4. Karen Christensen(2000) *Eco Living - A Handbook for the 21st Century*, Piatkus, London

Merseyside HAZARDS & Environmental Centre
Toxteth Town Hall, 15 High Park St. Liverpool L8 8DX.
Tel: 0151-726 9595
e-mail: centre@toxtethtownhall.freeserve.co.uk