



The Top 10 Most Common Harmful Ingredients Found in Personal Care Products

When you use personal care products such as cosmetics, lotions and shampoos, the ingredients in these products come into direct contact with your body's largest organ: your skin. Researchers at the Herb Research Foundation found the skin absorbs up to 60 percent of the chemicals it contacts, and absorbs them directly into the bloodstream. Therefore, it's important for you to know what these chemicals are so you can be aware.

Here are the 10 most common harmful chemicals found in your everyday beauty products.

1. **PHTHALATES / FRAGRANCE** - Phthalates are estrogen-mimickers that wreak havoc on the endocrine system in the human body and cause unwelcome hormonal effects. They are found in "fragrance" and nail polish. In Europe three phthalates- DEHP, DBP and BBP- are banned for use in cosmetics and in all toys and childcare articles. "Fragrance" is unregulated and can indicate the presence of up to four thousand different ingredients, many of which can be toxic or carcinogenic. Clinical observation proves fragrances can affect the central nervous system, causing depression, hyperactivity and irritability. Forms of "fragrance" are in the majority of personal care products such as perfume, moisturizers, soap, shampoos and candles. Looks like this on a label: DEHP, DBP, BBP, DINP, DIDP, DNOP.
2. **PROPYLENE GLYCOL** - Is related to anti-freeze and is a derivative of petroleum. It is the second most common ingredient in moisturizers, aside from water. It's linked to liver abnormalities and kidney damage, and is also a skin and eye irritant. It is found in sunscreens, moisturizers, baby lotion, antiperspirants and deodorants and shaving products. Looks like this on a label: Propylene Glycol, Proptylene Glycol, 1,2-Propanediol. Related synthetics: PEG (polyethylene glycol) and PPG (polypropylene glycol).
3. **FORMALDEHYDE** - Often referred to as "formalin," is used as a preservative and has been linked to cancer, developmental and reproductive problems and asthma. It is primarily used in nail polishes, shampoos and bleach. It has been banned in Japan and Sweden. Looks like this on a label: formaldehyde, formalin, formic aldehyde, oxomethane, oxymethylene.
4. **HYDROQUINONE** - Is used as an active ingredient in over-the-counter products such as skin lighteners, hair bleaches, concealers, facial cleansers and sunscreens with SPF 15 or higher. It is related to cancer, neurotoxicity, endocrine disruption and developmental and reproductive toxicity. Looks like this on a label: 1,4-Benzenediol, 1,4-Dihydroxybenzene, P-Dioxybenzene, 4-Hydroxyphenol, P-Hydroxyphenol, 1,4Benzenediol.
5. **PETROLATUM/PETROLEUM** - Although difficult to spot because of its many aliases, it's most commonly known as petroleum jelly. It is a fossil fuel that is broken down into smaller components, which contain hydrocarbons, and is a common ingredient in beauty products. It can be found in moisturizers, conditioners, wax depilatories, baby creams and makeup. Petroleum derivatives have been linked to cancer, developmental and reproductive damage, immune system toxicity, endocrine disruption and neurotoxicity. It is banned in Europe. Looks like this on a label: petrolatum, petroleum jelly, trioxaundecanedioi acid, toluene, 4-amino-2-hydroxytuolene, BHA.

6. **MERCURY** - Is a controversial ingredient that causes damage to the brain and is blamed for autism in children. It is most commonly found in eye products like mascara. Looks like this on a label: mercurous chloride, thimerosal.
7. **MINERAL OIL** - Is a petroleum derivative that has the same origins as fossil fuels. It's an ingredient in foundations, lipsticks, lotions and makeup removers. It has been linked to a variety of things, from clogged pores to cancer. It does not allow the skin to breathe. Looks like this on a label: liquidum paraffinum, paraffin oil, paraffin wax.
8. **LEAD** - In 1978 it was banned from paint due to the dangers it causes to the body. It can affect almost every organ and system in the body. It can cause anemia, an increase in blood pressure and it can damage the brain and kidneys. Somehow traces of it can still be found in hair dye and red lipsticks. Although lead should be labeled in some form or fashion, it is not. Therefore, look for products labeled "Lead-free!"
9. **COLORANTS/SYNTHETIC COLORS** - Used to create make-up shades and colors, these colorants are found in countless makeup and beauty products and are listed on labels as "FD&C" or "D&C" colors. Most colorants actually are regulated by the FDA; however, most are derived from coal tar, which has been linked to cause cancer. Looks like this on a label: D&C, FD&C.
10. **SODIUM LAURYL SULFATE / SODIUM LAURETH SULFATE** - Often found together in products acting as a foaming agent. It is a detergent which has been found to enter the brain, heart and liver and impairs the immune system. It also causes eye irritations and skin rashes. When mixed with other chemicals found in toiletries it can form carcinogenic (cancer-causing) compounds. It can be found in shampoos, conditioners, soaps and toothpastes. Looks like this on a label: Sodium Laureth Sulfate, Sodium Lauryl Sulfate, Sodium Lauryl Ether Sulfate, Anhydrous Sodium Lauryl Sulfate, Irium, SLS, SLES, MSDS, ALES, ALS.