

Don't Get Sick for Beauty's Sake!

12 Toxic Ingredients in Cosmetics and Beauty Products

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Introduction

Did you know the beauty industry is one of the least regulated in the United States?

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has oversight of cosmetics, but does not have the authority to require pre-market safety assessments. It's no surprise that some potentially dangerous and downright harmful substances could land in the cosmetics, beauty, and hygiene products we use every day.

As an enlightened consumer, you want to make sure you only use products that are safe on your skin and hair. After all, our skin is the largest organ on our bodies. Substances can break through the skin barrier and enter our bloodstream.

To help you [choose safe products](#), below are the top 12 known and potentially toxic ingredients you should be aware of. These are what the David Suzuki Foundation calls the "Dirty Dozen."

Take note that, aside from being harmful to humans, many are toxic to animals, plants and the rest of the environment as well.

What It Is	Why It's Bad (Or Could Be)	What To Look For In Ingredients Lists
1. BHA and BHT BHA (butylated hydroxyanisole) and BHT (butylated hydroxytoluene) and synthetic anti-oxidants used as preservatives in food and beauty products.	Possible allergic reactions Interferes with hormone function May cause cancer Toxic to animals in high doses: Impairs blood clotting; BHA induces tumors Toxic to aquatic organisms Accumulates in the environment <i>Use of BHA in cosmetics is prohibited in the European Union</i> <i>BHA is banned in Japan</i> <i>In California, products containing BHA must have a warning label that it could cause cancer</i>	BHA BHT butylated hydroxyanisole butylated hydroxytoluene "antioxidants for added freshness" "antioxidants as preservative" or similar wording Ask the manufacturer to find out exactly what antioxidants and preservatives are in their products.



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2. Coal tar dyes Pigments or colors derived from coal tar, a mixture of chemicals made from petroleum	May cause allergic skin reactions May cause cancer May be contaminated with heavy metals, which are harmful to the brain Use of hair dyes (which commonly use P-phenylenediamine) has been linked to increased risk for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a type of cancer May contribute to hyperactivity, ADHD and learning difficulties in children Very toxic to aquatic organisms Harmful to the environment <i>The European Union classifies p-phenylenediamine as toxic</i> <i>Canada's Cosmetic Regulations prohibits several coal tar dyes</i>	P-phenylenediamine "CI" followed by a five digit number. CI series 75000 and 77000 are for natural and inorganic pigments, respectively "FD&C" or "D&C" followed by a color name and number (F=food; D=drugs; C=cosmetics). "FD&C" means the colors are approved for use in food products; "D&C" colors are not approved for food
3. DEA Diethanolamine or DEA is a chemical used to create lather and improve the texture of shampoos, liquid soaps, creams and lotions and other products, including pharmaceuticals.	Exposure to DEA may cause irritation of the skin, nose, and throat When given intravenously to animals, DEA caused increased blood pressure, sedation, and coma DEA may react with other substances in beauty and hygiene products to form nitrosodiethanolamine (NDEA). NDEA has been linked to cancers of the stomach, esophagus, bladder, and liver	diethanolamine or DEA cocamide DEA or cocamide diethanolamine DEA lauryl sulfate or diethanolamine lauryl sulfate lauramide DEA or lauramide diethanolamine linoleamide DEA or linoleamide diethanolamine oleamide DEA or oleamide diethanolamine Any product containing TEA or triethanolamine



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4. Dibutyl phthalate Dibutyl phthalate or DBP is a solvent and plasticizer used commonly in dyes and nail polishes (to prevent nails from becoming brittle). May also be used in fragrance.	In lab experiments, causes developmental defects and impaired fertility in males May cause liver and kidney failure in children Increases the ability of other chemicals to cause genetic mutation Toxic to aquatic organisms <i>The European Union bans DBP in cosmetics, toys, and other products for children</i> <i>The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) have set exposure limits for DBP</i> <i>Health Canada bans the use of phthalates in children's toys</i>	dibutyl phthalate or DBP Other phthalates to watch out for: butyl benzyl phthalate diethyl phthalate diethylhexyl phthalate dimethyl phthalate dioctyl phthalate

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5. Formaldehyde-releasing preservatives Formaldehyde-releasing agents are used as preservatives in cosmetics, as well as vinyl flooring, wood products, household cleaners, and other products.	These chemicals continuously release small amounts of formaldehyde, which is known to cause cancer May cause allergies and irritate skin and eyes Occupational exposure to formaldehyde has been linked to leukemia <i>Canada restricts the use of formaldehyde-releasing chemicals in cosmetics</i> <i>The European Union requires the listing of these agents on product labels, and "contains formaldehyde" must be on the label, if it exceeds 0.05% concentration</i> <i>Japan and Sweden ban the use of formaldehyde-releasing preservatives in cosmetics and toiletries</i>	dimethyl-dimethyl (DMDM) hydantoin diazolidinyl urea imidazolidinyl urea methenamine quaternium-15 sodium hydroxymethylglycinate 2-bromo-2-nitropropane-1,3-diol (bronopol)
6. Parabens Parabens are the most widely used preservatives in cosmetics and body care products. They prevent the growth of bacteria in watery products. They can also be used in fragrance products, but won't be listed in the ingredients, because fragrances are considered trade secrets.	May mimic estrogen, the female hormone, and interfere with hormone function May also disrupt the male reproductive systems Linked to immunotoxicity and neurotoxicity Has been associated with breast cancer Has been shown to accumulate in the body after prolonged exposure, even at low levels <i>The European Union restricts the use of parabens in cosmetics</i>	methylparaben butylparaben propylparaben isobutylparaben ethylparaben isopropylparaben sodium methylparaben sodium propylparaben benzylparaben Other chemicals with "paraben" in their names



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7. Parfum (a.k.a. fragrance) Fragrance or parfum is any combination of chemicals used to provide fragrance in many products. Even those labeled “unscented” may contain chemicals to mask scents and/or numb the brain from perceiving smells. Because fragrance recipes are considered trade secrets, companies don’t have to disclose what chemical fragrances are in their products.	Possible irritants and allergens May trigger and exacerbate migraines and asthma, or even cause children to develop asthma Some may interfere with hormone function Some have been linked to toxicity, neurotoxicity, and cancer Many other “secret” fragrance ingredients have not been tested for safety <i>Environment Canada has categorized some synthetic musks as bioaccumulative and toxic</i> <i>The European Union restricts the use of some fragrances and requires a warning labels on products</i>	fragrance parfum
8. PEG compounds Polyethylene glycols or PEGs are petroleum-based compounds used to give products their creamy texture.	May be contaminated with ethylene oxide (known to cause cancers of the brain, uterine, breast, and leukemia), 1,4-dioxane (a possible carcinogen), and heavy metals, such as lead, which are harmful to the human brain May cause skin irritation, systemic toxicity, and genotoxicity Some PEG compounds aren't safe on damaged skin Increases the ability of absorb substances, including harmful ones A related chemical, propylene glycol, also enhances the absorption of substances and may cause allergic reactions	PEG-6, PEG-150 and similar ingredients polyethylene glycol propylene glycol



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9. Petrolatum Petrolatum, also known as petroleum jelly or mineral oil jelly, is a by-product of petroleum. It is used in lotions, lip balms, moisturizers and other products to lock moisture into skin. In haircare products, petrolatum is added to help hair shine.	May be contaminated with polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which may cause irritation and have been linked with cancer May cause premature skin aging and acne May "suffocate" the skin, decreasing the amount of oxygen absorbed by the skin May increase photosensitivity and sun damage May lead to dry skin, because it interferes with the body's moisturizing system <i>Having classified petrolatum as a carcinogen, the European Union restricts its use in cosmetics</i>	petrolatum petroleum jelly mineral oil jelly mineral oil
10. Siloxanes Siloxanes are silicon-based compounds used in skin and hair care products to give them a smooth texture, as well as to soften and moisturize skin.	D4 interferes with hormone function Toxic to aquatic organisms In the lab, D5 has been found to be harmful to the reproductive and immune systems, and caused tumors D4 and D5 are a concern for the environment, because they persist and accumulate in the environment <i>The European Union has classified D4 as an endocrine disruptor</i> <i>Environment Canada and Health Canada have proposed that D4 and D5 be added to the List of Toxic Substances</i>	cyclomethicone and ingredients ending in "siloxane" cyclotetrasiloxane or D4 cyclopentasiloxane or D5 cyclohexasiloxane or D6 simethicone and other polydimethylsiloxane (PDMS) silicone polymers



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11. Sodium laureth sulfate (SLES) and sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS) SLES and SLS are commonly used to increase lather and foaming in soaps and shampoos.	Can irritate skin, eyes, and respiratory tract In high concentrations, may cause skin corrosion and hair damage SLS causes canker sores and dry mouth Not metabolized by the liver and therefore accumulates in our bodies May be contaminated with ethylene oxide (known to cause cancers of the brain, uterine, breast, and leukemia) and 1,4-dioxane (a possible carcinogen) 1,4-dioxane persists and accumulates in the environment Toxic to aquatic organisms <i>The California Environmental Protection Agency considers ethylene oxide a developmental toxicant, because it may interfere with normal development in humans</i>	sodium laureth sulfate or SLES sodium lauryl sulfate or SLS

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12. Triclosan Triclosan is an anti-bacterial and anti-fungal agent. In Canada, it is also registered as a pesticide.	Alters hormone regulation in animals Can irritate skin and eyes Does not make cleansing products more effective than ordinary soap and water Toxic to aquatic organisms Excessive use contributes to the development of drug-resistant bacteria Stays and accumulates in the human body and the environment May react with other substances to form dioxins, which cause cancer <i>Health Canada limits the amount of triclosan that can be used in mouthwashes and cosmetics (but not in other products)</i> <i>After 2014, triclosan will no longer be allowed as a pesticide in Canada</i>	triclosan

Don't Put These Toxins on Your Body!

Shop for cosmetics, toiletries and other personal and home care products in my Alex+Von store.

Alex+Von guarantees that all its products are free of the toxic chemicals listed in this report, are safe for you and the planet, and are cruelty-free.

[Click here to see how many toxin-free yet effective products are available for you!](#)

New Customers!

Use code **"NEWCUST20OFF"** (without quotation marks) to get 20% off your first order



References

Alive at <http://www.alive.com>

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics at <http://safecosmetics.org>

Cancer Prevention Coalition at <http://www.preventcancer.com/consumers/>

Celcias at <http://www.celsias.com>

David Suzuki Foundation at <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/>

Environmental Working Group at <http://www.ewg.org>

Environment Canada at <http://www.ec.gc.ca/>

Government of Canada Chemical Substances at <http://www.chemicalsubstanceschimiques.gc.ca>

Healthy Child Chemical Encyclopedia at <http://www.healthychild.org/issues/chemical/>

Livestrong at <http://www.livestrong.com>

Natural Health Information Centre at <http://www.natural-health-information-centre.com>

Natural News at <http://www.naturalnews.com>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration at <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/healthguidelines/>

Phend at <http://www.phend.co.za>

The Star at <http://www.thestar.com>

US Environmental Protection Agency - Technology Transfer Network Air Toxics Website at <http://www.epa.gov/ttnatw01/>

US Food and Drug Administration Consumer Updates at <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/default.htm>

US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health PubMed at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>



Resources

[Alex+Von](#)

This online retailer sells only products that do not contain any of the toxins listed in this report. I particularly recommend the [100% Pure brand](#). It uses only plant-based pigments, food grade ingredients and a proprietary 100% natural preservative system (patent pending). 100% Pure products are literally safe enough to eat! My Alex+Von store is at [ShopNaturalSkinCare.com](#). Use code **NEWCUST20OFF** to get 20% off your first order.

Alex+Von only ships to the United States as of this writing. If you're in Canada or other location, you may order 100% Pure products from this [100% Pure](#) website.

[Floracopeia](#)

If you love fragrance but want to avoid the possible dangers of synthetic fragrances, then check out the essential oils, natural perfumes, and other aromatic treasures available at Floracopeia. They offer only organic, therapeutic-grade, plant-based products that have none of the synthetic chemicals, fillers and extenders of ordinary perfumes. Go to <http://www.floracopeia.com/discount> and type "lexirolodrigo" for a 25% off coupon.

[Natural Moms Blog](#)

This is my eco-friendly living and parenting blog, where I regularly talk about toxins, natural health care, environment, and other issues of concern to enlightened consumers.

To your beauty and health,



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