

'Dirty Dozen' cosmetic chemicals to avoid

Some of the ingredients in beauty products aren't that pretty. U.S. researchers report that 1 in 8 of the 82,000 ingredients used in personal care products are industrial chemicals, including carcinogens, pesticides, reproductive toxins, and hormone disruptors.

You can avoid harmful chemicals when you shop smart and audit your bathroom cupboard using this list of harmful ingredients:

- **BHA and BHT:** Used mainly in moisturizers and makeup as preservatives. Suspected endocrine disruptors and may cause cancer (BHA). Harmful to fish and other wildlife.
- **Coal tar dyes:** p-phenylenediamine and colours listed as "CI" followed by a five digit number. Look for p-phenylenediamine hair dyes and in other products colours. The U.S. colour name may also be listed (e.g. "FD&C Blue No. 1" or "Blue 1"). These are a potential to cause cancer and may be contaminated with heavy metals toxic to the brain.
- **DEA-related ingredients:** Used in creamy and foaming products, such as moisturizers and shampoos. Can react to form nitrosamines, which may cause cancer. Harmful to fish and other wildlife. Look also for related chemicals MEA and TEA.
- **Dibutyl phthalate:** Used as a plasticizer in some nail care products. Suspected endocrine disrupter and reproductive toxicant. Harmful to fish and other wildlife.
- **Formaldehyde-releasing preservatives:** Look for DMDM hydantoin, diazolidinyl urea, imidazolidinyl urea, methenamine and quarternium-15. Used in a variety of cosmetics. Slowly release small amounts of formaldehyde, which causes cancer.
- **Parabens:** Used in a variety of cosmetics as preservatives. Suspected endocrine disruptors and may interfere with male reproductive functions.
- **Parfum (a.k.a. fragrance):** Any mixture of fragrance ingredients used in a variety of cosmetics — even in some products marketed as "unscented." Some fragrance ingredients can trigger allergies and asthma. Some linked to cancer and neurotoxicity. Some harmful to fish and other wildlife.
- **PEG compounds:** Used in many cosmetic cream bases. Can be contaminated with 1,4-dioxane, which may cause cancer. Also for related chemical propylene glycol and other ingredients with the letters "eth" (e.g., polyethylene glycol).
- **Petrolatum:** Used in some hair products for shine and as a moisture barrier in some lip balms, lip sticks and moisturizers. A petroleum product that can be contaminated with polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which may cause cancer.
- **Siloxanes:** Look for ingredients ending in "-siloxane" or "-methicone." Used in a variety of cosmetics to soften, smooth and moisten. Suspected endocrine disrupter and reproductive toxicant (cyclotetrasiloxane). Harmful to fish and other wildlife.
- **Sodium laureth sulfate:** Used in foaming cosmetics, such as shampoos, cleansers and bubble bath. Can be contaminated with 1,4-dioxane, which may cause cancer. Look also for related chemical sodium lauryl sulfate and other ingredients with the letters "eth" (e.g., sodium laureth sulfate).
- **Triclosan:** Used in antibacterial cosmetics, such as toothpastes, cleansers and antiperspirants. Suspected endocrine disrupter and may contribute to antibiotic resistance in bacteria. Harmful to fish and other wildlife.

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