

## Carcinogens in cosmetics and toiletries

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The following is excerpted from *Unreasonable Risk* (2001), by Samuel Epstein:

Most cosmetics and personal care products (CPCPs) manufactured and marketed by mainstream and multilevel marketing (MLM) industries are veritable "witches brews" of multiple known carcinogenic ingredients and contaminants. However, no such information is disclosed to the public.

Apart from a few complete products which are themselves carcinogenic, such as talc, there are two classes of major carcinogenic ingredients.

The first class includes those ingredients that are carcinogenic themselves, which are known as "frank" carcinogens. The second group are those "hidden" carcinogens that, while not carcinogenic themselves, may under certain conditions have carcinogenic properties.

Over 40 carcinogens used in mainstream industry CPCPs are "frank" (Table 2.2), and over 30 are "hidden" (Table 2.3).

While the identity of the "frank" carcinogens, besides other ingredients, is listed on the product labels, the alphabet soup of complex chemical names conveys no meaningful information whatsoever on their cancer risks to unsuspecting consumers.

Still less revealing are the "hidden" carcinogens to which there is no reference on ingredient listings. As such, their presence is unrecognized by the majority of chemists, toxicologists and cancer prevention experts, let alone consumers."

### Table 2.2 "Frank" Carcinogens

- Benzyl Acetate\*
- Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA)
- Butylated Hydroxytoluene (BHT)
- Butyl Benzylphthalate
- "Coal Tar Dyes" (and Lacques)
- Dyes & Colors: Red 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 17, 19 & 33- Green 5- Orange 17
- FD & C: Blue 1 & 2- Green 3- Red 4 & 40- Yellow 5 & 6- Blue 1, 2 & 4  
Diaminophenol- Disperse Blue 1- Disperse Yellow 3
- Nitrophenylenediamine
- p-Phenylenediamine\* (following oxidation)
- Phenyl-p-phenylenediamine
- Crystalline Silica
- Diethanolamine (DEA)
- Dioctyl Adipate
- Ethyl Alcohol\*
- Fluoride\*
- Formaldehyde
- Glutaral
- Hydroquinone
- Methylene Chloride
- Polyvinyl Pyrrolidone
- Pyrocatechol
- Saccharin
- Talc
- Titanium Dioxide\*

(\*Evidence of carcinogenicity is limited)

### Table 2.3 "Hidden" Carcinogens

## Contaminants

- Aflatoxin: in peanut oil and flour
- Arsenic and Lead: in coal tar dyes, polyvinyl acetate, PEGs (polyethylene glycols)
- Chloroaniline: in chlorhexidine
- Crystalline Silica: in amorphous silicates
- DDT, Dieldrin, Endrin and other organochlorine pesticides: in lanolin, hydrogenated cottonseed oil, quarternium-26
- DEA (diethanolamine): in DEA-cocamide/lauramide condensates, quarternium-26
- 1,4-Dioxane: in ethoxylated alcohols, including PEGs, oleths, choleth-24, cetareth-3, laureths, polysorbate 60 & 80, nonoxynol
- Ethylhexylacrylate: in acrylate and methacrylate polymers
- Ethylene Oxide: in PEGs, oleths, cetareth-3, laureths, polysorbate 60 & 80, nonoxynol
- Formaldehyde: in polyoxymethylene urea

## Nitrosamine (NDELA) Precursors

- Bromonitrodioxane
- Bronopol (2-bromo-2-nitropropane-1,3-diol)
- Diethanolamine (DEA)
- DEA-Cocamide, Lauramide & Oleamide condensates
- Metheneamine
- Morpholine
- Padimate-O (octyldimethyl para-amino benzoic acid)
- Pyroglutamic Acid
- Triethanolamine (TEA)
- TEA-Sodium Lauryl Sulfate

## Formaldehyde Releasers

- Bronopol
- Diazolidinyl Urea
- DMDM-Hydantoin
- Imidazolidinyl Urea
- Metheneamine
- Quarternium-15
- Sodium/Hydroxymethylglycinate

## Are your products putting you and your family at risk ?

Check if your products are SAFE in the skin deep database at

[www.cosmeticsdatabase.com](http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com)

[www.safecosmetics.org](http://www.safecosmetics.org) check for companies that are committed to reduce or eliminate harmful chemicals from their products.

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