



UNMASKED

Nine Ugly Truths Behind the Myth of Cosmetics Safety

1. TOXIC CHEMICALS ARE IN OUR BEAUTY PRODUCTS—AND IN OUR BODIES.

Every day we use multiple personal care products—from baby shampoo to deodorant, lotion to mascara—that contain chemical ingredients we absorb through our skin, inhale and ingest. Some of these chemicals are linked to cancer, birth defects, learning disabilities and other health problems epidemic in our society.

2. SMALL EXPOSURES CAN ADD UP TO HARM.

The cosmetics industry says it's safe to put toxic chemicals linked to cancer, infertility or other health problems into personal care products because the amount in each product is so small. But none of us use just one product, and we're exposed to hazardous chemicals through many non-cosmetic sources too. "Just a little bit" adds up, and new evidence shows that even tiny doses of some chemicals, such as hormone disruptors, can be harmful.

3. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE PROTECTING US, BUT IT'S NOT.

The federal law that governs the cosmetics industry is more than 70 years old. And because of major loopholes in this weak law, the FDA doesn't even have the authority to assess the safety of cosmetic ingredients before they're put into products we all use. The European Union now bans more than 1,100 chemicals from personal care products because they may cause cancer, birth defects or reproductive harm. In stark contrast, just 10 ingredients are banned from cosmetics in the United States.

4. YOU CAN'T BELIEVE INDUSTRY SAFETY CLAIMS.

Manufacturers say their products are safe. But what do those claims really mean? It may mean that the company has tested ingredients it uses only to see if they cause rashes, swelling or other acute reactions. Companies are not required to assess the safety of their products,

or to take into account long-term health effects, such as cancer or infertility. Because there is no government standard for safety, companies can say whatever they want about the safety of their products.

5. EVEN INGREDIENTS THAT ARE KNOWN TO CAUSE HARM CAN BE PUT INTO PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS.

Few ingredients have been assessed for long-term health impacts, but those that have and are known or suspected to be toxic are still allowed in cosmetics. Some of the most problematic are FRAGRANCE, PLACENTA, LEAD ACETATE, PHTHALATES, HYDROQUINONE, NANOPARTICLES and PETROCHEMICALS. Learn more about these ingredients and how to avoid them at www.safecosmetics.org.

6. THE \$50-BILLION U.S. COSMETICS INDUSTRY OPPOSES LAWS THAT WOULD PROTECT CONSUMERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

The cosmetics industry trade association has lobbied against laws that would control pollution at cosmetics manufacturing plants, require recycled content in packaging and add more consumer safety information on labels. The industry says it can regulate itself. An industry-funded panel—not the FDA or any other government agency—currently reviews the "safety" of cosmetics.

7. TWO OF THE HIGHEST-CONCERN COSMETICS ARE MARKETED TO WOMEN OF COLOR.

Products promising lighter skin and straighter hair are problematic because of their message about what is considered beautiful. But the cosmetics safety database Skin Deep shows that hair relaxers and skin lighteners may share a second problem: the products contain ingredients such as hydroquinone, placenta and petroleum byproducts that are linked to cancer, reproductive and hormonal problems and skin sensitization.

8. THE WORD "NATURAL" ON A PRODUCT LABEL DOESN'T GUARANTEE IT'S SAFE—OR NATURAL.

Laws do not regulate the use of words like "natural" and "organic" on cosmetics and personal care products. While seals like "USDA Certified Organic" do have standards, some products with organic ingredients can still also contain harmful chemicals.

9. KIDS' AND MEN'S PRODUCTS ARE ALSO IN NEED OF SAFETY UPDATES.

It is perfectly legal for companies to use carcinogens in bubble bath and unidentified fragrance ingredients in baby shampoo. During each bath time, babies may be exposed to dozens of chemicals that have never been assessed for safety. And men's after-shave lotions, anti-dandruff shampoos, teeth whiteners, sunless tanning products, hair-removal products and colognes may contain ingredients linked to cancer and other adverse health impacts.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. JOIN US ONLINE.

Visit www.safecosmetics.org for the latest on cosmetics safety and to sign up for our news and action alert e-mails. Become a Facebook fan at www.facebook.com/safecosmetics. Follow us on Twitter at [@safecosmetics](https://twitter.com/safecosmetics) and [@nontoxicissexy](https://twitter.com/nontoxicissexy).

2. CHOOSE SAFER PRODUCTS.

Click on the Skin Deep link at www.safecosmetics.org to visit Environmental Working Group's cosmetics safety database, which reviews ingredients found in more than 50,000 name-brand personal care products. Find out if your products contain hazardous chemicals and find safer alternatives.

3. TELL COSMETICS COMPANIES YOU WANT SAFE PRODUCTS.

Look on product packaging or online for customer service hotlines and comment forms. Let companies know you're a customer who wants safe products without toxic chemicals. Consider buying from companies that have signed the Compact for Safe Cosmetics. A list of signers is at www.safecosmetics.org.

4. TELL ELECTED OFFICIALS YOU WANT SMARTER LAWS THAT PROTECT OUR HEALTH.

Go to www.safecosmetics.org and send a message to your elected officials. Tell them you want legislation that will make cosmetics safer for everyone!

5. SPREAD THE WORD.

Tell your friends, coworkers and family about the problem of toxic chemicals in cosmetics and how they can take action. Host your own Safe Cosmetics House Party—we have all the downloadable materials you need at www.safecosmetics.org.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

E-mail info@safecosmetics.org
or call 617-338-8131 ext. 201.

The [Campaign for Safe Cosmetics](#) is a coalition of more than 100 nonprofit organizations working to protect the health of consumers and workers by eliminating dangerous chemicals from cosmetics and personal care products. Core members include: Breast Cancer Fund, Clean Water Action, Commonweal, Environmental Working Group, Friends of the Earth, Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition and Women's Voices for the Earth.

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics

www.SafeCosmetics.org

