



TOXIC CHEMICALS IN SALON PRODUCTS: What Salon Workers Need to Know

Have you experienced breathing problems, headaches, skin rashes, or other health problems while at work? Did you know that many products used in hair and nail salons contain a number of hazardous chemicals that may pose health risks to you and your clients? Unfortunately, salon workers commonly report negative health effects associated with their work. Long term studies of salon workers have also reported higher risks of chronic conditions, including certain cancers, immune diseases, asthma, and higher risk of some birth defects in their children.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR HAZARDOUS INGREDIENTS

- Ingredients in salon products can sometimes be found on the product label, although manufacturers are not required to list all ingredients in products sold for professional use.
- Stylists can look at the Safety Data Sheets associated with the product, where some hazardous ingredients (although not all ingredients) must appear. (These sheets should have been sent along with the products.)
- Stylists can call the manufacturer's customer service line for more information.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOUR HEALTH

For some chemicals, hazardous ingredients can be avoided altogether by purchasing alternative products. For those that can't be avoided, you can take precautions to protect your health.

HARMFUL CHEMICALS TO AVOID

The chemicals on this list are those which can be reasonably avoided by using currently available products containing safer alternatives.

CHEMICAL NAME	FOUND IN THESE PRODUCTS	SYMPTOMS OF EXPOSURE	POTENTIAL LONG TERM EFFECTS
Dibutyl Phthalate	Nail polish	Nausea, dizziness, eye and skin irritation	Reproductive toxin, birth defects
Formaldehyde or methylene glycol	Nail hardener, nail polish, keratin hair straighteners	Breathing problems, coughing, wheezing, skin rashes, eye, nose, throat irritation	Cancer, dermatitis
Toluene	Nail polish, nail glue, hair dye, wig glue/ hairpiece bonding	Dizziness, headaches, skin rashes, eye, nose, throat irritation	Liver damage, kidney damage, birth defects, pregnancy loss
Methyl Methacrylate (MMA)	Artificial nails	Breathing problems, chest tightness, eye, nose, throat irritation, headaches, confusion	Loss of smell, reproductive toxin, asthma
Cyclopentasiloxane or cyclomethicone	Flat iron sprays, thermal protection sprays	Under the high heat of a flat iron, cyclopentasiloxane creates formaldehyde. Formaldehyde leads to breathing problems, coughing, wheezing, skin rashes, eye, nose, throat irritation	Formaldehyde exposure may cause cancer, dermatitis
Styrene	Hair extension glue, lace wig glue	Vision problems, trouble concentrating, tiredness	Cancer
Trichlorethylene	Hair extension glue, lace wig glue	Dizziness, headache, confusion, nausea, eye and skin irritation	Liver damage, kidney damage, dermatitis, double vision
1,4 Dioxane	Hair extension glue, lace wig glue	Eye and nose irritation	Cancer, liver damage, kidney damage
2-butoxyethanol or Ethylene glycol monobutyl ether	Disinfectants, cleaners	Headache, eye and nose irritation	Reproductive toxin

BE MINDFUL OF THESE HARMFUL CHEMICALS

The following list of chemicals are those known to be harmful to health, but may be difficult to avoid due to a lack of safer available alternatives. Information about these chemicals is provided here to help you better identify which chemicals or products might be most responsible for symptoms you are experiencing.

CHEMICAL NAME	FOUND IN THESE PRODUCTS	SYMPTOMS OF EXPOSURE	POTENTIAL LONG TERM EFFECTS
Quaternary Ammonium Compounds or "dimethyl benzyl ammonium chloride"	Disinfectants and cleaners	Skin, eye and nose irritation	Asthma
P-phenylenediamine	Hair dyes, black henna tattoos	Skin irritation	Dermatitis
Glyceryl thioglycolate	Permanent wave solutions, "acid perms"	Skin irritation	Dermatitis
Ammonium persulfate	Hair bleach	Eye, skin and nose irritation, coughing, shortness of breath	Asthma, dermatitis
Ethyl methacrylate	Artificial nails	Eye and skin irritation, rashes on eyelids, face or neck, difficulty concentrating, coughing, shortness of breath	Asthma
Acetone	Nail polish remover, hairspray	Eye, skin and throat irritation, dizziness	Eye, skin and throat irritation, dizziness
Acetonitrile	Nail glue remover	Eye, skin and throat irritation, face flush, chest tightness, nausea	Weakness, exhaustion
Butyl acetate, ethyl acetate or isopropyl acetate	Nail polish, nail polish remover, wig glue/ hairpiece bonding	Eye, skin and throat irritation, headaches, dizziness	Eye, skin and throat irritation, dermatitis
Methacrylic acid	Nail primer, eyelash glue	Skin burns, eye, nose and throat irritation	Kidney damage, dermatitis, reproductive toxin

NOTE: These lists are not exhaustive. More research is needed to both better identify hazardous chemicals used in salon products, and to develop safer chemical alternatives for harmful chemicals commonly in use.

BEST PRACTICES TO REDUCE EXPOSURE

Some harmful chemicals may be difficult to avoid in salon work, due to the current lack of viable alternatives and the lack of ingredient disclosure directly on product labels. For these chemicals, the best advice is to reduce your exposure as much as possible by:

- **Ensuring good ventilation in the salon**
- **Keeping trash cans tightly closed**
- **Wearing nitrile gloves and protective clothing**
- **Using small amounts of the product when performing services**
- **Washing hands before and after use**

For more advice and resources on protecting your health in the salon go to:

nailsalonalliance.org/nail-salon-workers/.

For more information and resources about toxic chemicals in salon products, salon worker health and safety issues, and how you can get involved, go to www.womensvoices.org.



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