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Creating a Natural Skin Care Routine

How to Choose Natural Skin Care Products and Avoid Toxins & Chemicals

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Skin care products are ubiquitous in our modern lives, with most women slathering an average of **15 skin care products** and cosmetics on their bodies every day, which contain 126 unique ingredients. From lotions to toothpaste, makeup to shaving products, if you use conventional brands, you could potentially be exposing yourself to dozens of chemicals in cosmetics and personal care products.

Photo credit: Flickr / Ale Art

Only 11 Toxins in Cosmetics Tested for Safety

The terrifying thing is that very few of these chemicals have been **tested for safety** to the human population and the environment. In the US, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized the cosmetic industry to use *any raw material* as an ingredient without approval, with no safety testing. Indeed, toxins in cosmetics and personal care products are to be self-policed by the industry's Cosmetics Ingredient Review Panel. In the 36 years since its creation, only 11 ingredients have been ruled as unsafe by the panel.

The situation is only slightly better **in Canada**, where at least cosmetics

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companies are required to list the chemicals in cosmetics on an ingredient label (a requirement that doesn't exist in the US). Health Canada and Environment Canada are testing the 4,000 substances identified as potentially harmful, but have a long way to go to get through the list. There is also a Cosmetic Ingredient Hotlist in Canada, but this has no legal authority to enforce bans on ingredients.

As a result, unsuspecting consumers like you, thinking you're protected by your government from an industry that seeks profits before health, apply all kinds of skin care products to your bodies every day. What's more, these chemicals don't stay on your body—you wash them off as you shower every day, and that means they flow into our wild rivers and lakes. We know for sure that many of these chemicals disrupt reproductive function and cause cancer in the wild. What we don't yet know is what the interaction of all these chemicals will do to wildlife over time. We may be facing a frightening future if we continue to lavishly use such toxins in cosmetics and personal care products.



Photo credit: Flickr / pabadoo

How to Spy Natural Skin Care Alternatives

The good news is that more and more natural skin care alternatives are coming on the market every day that use only plant-based, safe ingredients for you and the planet. Here's how to identify safe, natural skin care alternatives as you shop:

- **Avoid these ingredients:** 1,4-dioxane, alcohols, ammonia, butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA), coal tar dyes, DMDM hydantoin, diethanolamine (DEA), ethanolamine, mineral oil, octyl-dimethyl, octyl-methoxycinnamate, oxybenzone, parabens, phthalates, polyethylene glycols (PEGs), quaternium-15, salicylic acid, synthetic fragrances, triclosan, triethanolamine (TEA).
- **Seek out plant based ingredients:** The above list isn't exhaustive of those that are harmful to your health, so when in doubt seek out brands

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that list ingredients made from plants listed in plain English, like olive oil or peach pits. If you would eat it, it's probably safe to apply to your skin.

- **Look up ingredients before buying:** If a product doesn't come with an ingredient list printed on the packaging, go to [EWG's Skin Deep database](#) and search for the brand and product name. They'll tell you what's in the product and what level of risk it poses to you.

And remember to be kind to the non-human creatures of our planet too, by choosing products with these logos:



Leaping Bunny Logo



Certified Vegan Logo

About the author:

Maryruth has been seeking the keys to environmental justice—both at home and at work—for over a decade. Growing up adjacent to wild spaces, Maryruth developed a healthy respect (and whimsical appreciation) for things non-human, but her practical mind constantly draws her down to earth to ponder tangible solutions to complex eco-problems. With interests that range from green living to green business, sustainable building designs to organic gardening practices, ecosystem restoration to environmental health, Maryruth has been exploring and writing about earth-matters for most of her life. Of special interest is the subject of ecopsychology and the role the natural world plays in the long-term health and well-being of humanity. You can learn more about Maryruth's work by [visiting her site](#).

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