

Human Vitality

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Read Personal Care Product Labels to Protect Yourself

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Health-conscious people are concerned about what they put into their bodies, but many neglect what they put *on* themselves. Before leaving the house, a woman uses an average of 12 personal care products, many loaded with unlisted toxins that have never been tested. Consumers are often fooled into believing their purchases are safe due to green washing, the practice of designing and marketing non-green products as environmentally friendly.^[i]

Becoming aware of these toxin-laden ingredients and choosing organic alternatives will help you maintain the healthy lifestyle you strive for. At Hearts, one of our goals is to remove the blinders so that conscientious consumers like you can avoid being duped by these dubious green marketing claims. With this guide on how to read labels on personal care products, you'll be much better informed and capable of making healthy choices for you and the planet.



Quick Guide: Understanding Toxic Cosmetic Ingredients

- **515 synthetic chemicals for every woman daily:** During a typical makeup and grooming routine, the average woman uses up to 515 synthetic chemicals on her body.^[ii] Men use only 85 toxic ingredients.^[iii]
- **Cancer, Alzheimer's, hair loss ++ from personal care chems:** A classy mixture of perfume, makeup, sunscreen, deodorant, hair products, nail polish, and lotions can cause major health issues, including breast cancer, skin cancer, developmental disorders, neurological problems, and Alzheimer's disease. Slow buildup of these toxins can also lead to memory loss, respiratory complications, headaches, vomiting and nausea, mood swings, and hair loss. ^[iv] ^[v]
- **Gone but not eco forgotten:** Many chemicals remain biologically persistent after leaving our bodies, entering the environment to harm wildlife and plants. Lead acetate, the colorant used in hair dyes; butylated hydroxytoluene, a fragrance used to mask odors; sodium lauryl, a common foaming agent; polyvinylpyrrolidone, the binding agent in hairsprays; and parabens, often found in lotions, are all common persistent chemicals that take centuries to biodegrade after being flushed down the sink. ^[vi] ^[vii]
- **Witches brew of chemicals in our nation's water:** Scientists are extremely concerned about the mixing of toxic cosmetic ingredients in our natural waterways.^[viii] They predict a buildup of toxic chemicals will lead to reproductive disorders, birth defects, learning disabilities, and hormone disruption.^[ix]
- **11% of cosmetic ingredients are tested for safety:** Of the 10,500 ingredients that are used in cosmetics and personal care products, only 11% have been tested.^[x] That's because they are not food or drug products, so the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not regulate them, require them to be listed, or review their safety – no one does.^[xi] And even when a product is later found to be hazardous, public recalls are merely voluntary.^[xii]

Take Action! Embracing Safe Personal Care Products

1. **Read, read, read before you buy:** Start by exploring the Environmental Working Group's (EWG) [Skin Deep Cosmetics Database](#) which provides extensive information on brands, individual chemicals, and other dangers to watch out for. Above all, if a product doesn't list its ingredients, don't trust it!
2. **Take a pocket guide when eco shopping:** Two good options: The EWG has a [Shopper's Guide to Safe Cosmetics](#) pocket print-out or the HealthyChild.org Healthy [Personal Care Products Pocket Shopping Guide](#). They've also got a [Healthy Baby Care Products](#) version.
3. **Use a greener cosmetics app when shopping:** Both HealthyChild.org guides are available as [iPhone Apps](#) for the technologically inclined.
4. **Trust reliable natural personal care brands:** Even though 41% of us are inclined to believe claims of green are true (according to Forrester), you can't always trust such claims.^[xiii] Promises of *free from*, *natural*, and *organic* aren't always true since such claims are unregulated and hence legal.^[xiv] Choose products from these 322 natural skin care companies who have signed the [Compact for Safe Cosmetics](#) and honored their pledge to replace toxic chemicals in their products with safer alternatives.
5. **Save money, ditch your toxic lineup over time:** Throwing away all of your **toxic personal** care products in one day might be tempting, but it might not be feasible. Instead, when you reach the end of a product, dispose of it properly (recycle the container!) and replace it with an eco-friendly alternative. Start with The Daily Green's [Best Personal Care Product Nominees](#) lineup for easily accessible brands.
6. **Support campaigns for lower-toxicity products:** Join the [Campaign for Safe Cosmetics](#) by exploring their website and finding out how you can make a difference in consumer product options. Their [Take Action](#) page has great ideas and suggestions for how to become an advocate for toxic-free cosmetics. Learn more about the [Federal Policy Reform](#) that if enacted would require companies to test the safety of their products, label harmful ingredients, and phase out the most toxic ingredients in favor of organic replacements.

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics



www.SafeCosmetics.org

Dig Deeper: Toxic Cosmetic Ingredients

- Stay in touch with the latest developments in cosmetic chemicals and personal care legislations via The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics' [News Coverage](#).
- Learn about current and proposed regulations in the US, Canada, and Europe regarding cosmetics and personal care ingredients through The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics' [Regulations](#) section.

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