

# Identifying Safe Cosmetics

Many common ingredients in cosmetics have been shown to have harmful effects:

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| <p><b>Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA)</b></p>                     | <p>An additive regularly used to preserve fats and oils in cosmetics, such as lipsticks. The National Toxicology Program has concluded that BHA “is reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen.” BHT, its chemical cousin, is also a chemical of concern.</p>   |
| <p><b>Triclosan</b></p>  | <p>An antibacterial agent, originally registered as a pesticide, commonly sold under the trade names Microban, UltraFresh, BioFresh, and Amicor. It is an endocrine disrupting chemical, or EDC, that is linked to antibiotic resistance and is persistent in the environment. In 2017, the EPA banned Triclosan in soap. New studies suggest this chemical may even alter gut microbes which can promote the development of colon cancer. Triclosan is found in personal care products, like body wash, toothpaste, antibacterial soaps and can even be found in other products, such as toys. Read the list of ingredients to be sure.</p> |
| <p><b>Coal Tar</b></p>   | <p>A coal by-product and known human carcinogen used in many skin and hair care products, such as dandruff shampoo.</p>  |
| <p><b>Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (or SLS)</b></p>                     | <p>Commonly used as a foaming agent in detergents, toothpaste, some face washes and other cosmetics and personal care products. SLS is a known endocrine disrupting chemical (EDC) that can be found in nearly all products that foam. SLS can be very irritating to the skin. Sodium Laureth Sulfate (SLES), while less irritating, has been found to be contaminated with carcinogens</p>  |
| <p><b>Formaldehyde</b></p>                                       | <p>A known human carcinogen that can be produced as a by-product in some nail polishes, shampoos, bubble baths, and mouthwashes.</p>   |
| <p><b>Paraben (and chemical names that end in “-araben”)</b></p> | <p>Often used as a preservative, parabens are found in many shampoos and lotions. Some forms of “-arabens” are potent endocrine disrupting chemicals, or EDCs. Methylparaben has been shown to interfere with some drug effectiveness, such as with Tamoxifen, which is used to fight breast cancer. Several parabens have been banned in Europe for use in cosmetics.</p>   |
| <p><b>Phthalates</b></p>   | <p>May be listed as DEHP, DEP, BBP, DBP, DINP, DIDP or DNOP; there are more than 25 on the market. A broad group of petroleum-based additives, used both as a plasticizer and in cosmetics for many purposes. Many are potent endocrine disrupting chemicals, or EDCs, and are linked to cancer. DEHP, DBP, and BBP are banned in Europe from use in cosmetics. Some phthalates interfere with the effectiveness of Tamoxifen. DEHP is classified as a “reasonably anticipated human carcinogen</p>  |

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## Here are some tips for selecting safer beauty products\*:

1. **Read ingredient labels.** Look for plant-based (botanical) products and names you can pronounce. Keep in mind that even some botanicals can cause allergic reactions. Be wary of ingredients in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, which are often acronyms for synthetic or petroleum-based chemicals of concern.
2. **Use certified organic products.** These are free of phthalates, parabens, and other questionable ingredients.
3. **Be aware** that simple, familiar, and fewer ingredients usually indicate safer products.
4. **Look for products** that state they are “readily biodegradable” (able to be decomposed naturally) and “non-toxic to humans and aquatic life.”
5. **Use a diluted vinegar rinse** to reduce fungal related conditions and to treat and prevent dandruff (Use a 4:1 dilution of water to vinegar.)
6. **Avoid products with formaldehyde**, such as hair-straighteners.
7. **Use safer nail products.** Nail polish can contain very harmful chemicals such as formaldehyde, toluene, phthalates, and more. Many of these become volatile organic chemicals that should not be inhaled. Check EWG's Skin Deep to find safe polishes. Most nail polish removers are made of acetone. Acetone is a strong solvent capable of dissolving materials, including plastics and nail polish. It can irritate the skin and eyes. It is unclear whether non-acetone nail polish removers are preferable.

\*Research ingredients and safer personal care products at **EWG's Skin Deep**. Please see the Toolkit for the link to the website and a 2-minute video on how to use the Skin Deep website and app.