

Top 10 cosmetic toxins to avoid

by Emma Peters

ultimatebeautywisdom.com



1, 4 Dioxane

What: This is a tricky one because it doesn't appear on labels. It's formed as a byproduct of mixing ethylene oxide to other ingredients to make them less harsh. For example, Sodium Laurel sulfate is quite harsh on the skin but when mixed with ethylene oxide, it becomes less so, creating Sodium Laureth sulfate.

Where: It's commonly found in products containing suds. Shampoos, liquid soaps, bubble bath.

Why avoid: Carcinogenic. Possible Cancer causing, organ-system toxicity, irritant.

Who should avoid: Everyone. Women tend to use several if not more products per day, so the risk of layering products containing this dangerous chemical is serious. In particular, pregnant women, infants and teenagers Should steer clear of products that may contain 1,4 Dioxane.

What to look out for: Ingredients to be wary of are PEG usually followed by a number, polyethylene glycol, polyoxyethelene, and ingredients ending in "eth" and "xynol"

DEA, TEA, MEA, ETA

What: As a group these chemicals are called Ethanol amines. They are used in a wide variety of household and cosmetic products as emulsifiers and pH balancers.

Where: Mascaras, foundations, blush, eyeshadows, eyeliners, fragrances, sunscreens, lotions, cleansers, hair dyes, household cleaners

Why avoid: Health concerns are: Cancer, organ-system toxicity possibly affecting male reproductive health as well as accumulating in the liver and kidneys.

Who should avoid: Everyone

What to look out for: Diethanolamine (DEA), Triethalumine (TEA), Monoethalumine (MEA), Ethanolomine (ETA)

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Formaldehyde

What: This is of the highest concern according to the EWG Skin Deep website who gives it a 10/10 score for toxicity. This is another of those hidden chemicals not always listed in the ingredients as it's released by a number of preservatives. If you think about it, it's what's used to embalm dead people...

Where: Nail Polish, wide variety of body and hair care products, hair growth products, antiperspirant.

Why avoid: Health concerns are: Cancer, Immune system toxicity, allergen and irritant.

Who should avoid: Everyone

What to look out for: Formalin, Formic aldehyde, Merthaldehyde, methanal, Methyl aldehyde, oxomethane, oxymethylene. It can also be released by other ingredients such as DMDM hydantion, quaternium-15, diaxolidinyl urea.

Fragrance

What: Fragrance is a mixture of natural and synthetic chemicals used to give a product a pleasant smell. Fragrance in and of itself isn't an ingredient but a collection of possibly hundreds of undisclosed chemicals. Due to "trade secret" laws, companies aren't required to name what is in "fragrance". In fact lots of companies aren't aware of what goes into the said fragrance as the pre-made perfume can come from a separate company. Not to say that absolutely ALL products containing fragrance are harmful, just be prepared to do some research into the products you are using.

Where: In almost everything: Perfume, lotions, haircare, skincare, makeup

Why avoid: Health concerns are potentially numerous because of the unknown ingredients and because it can be inhaled, ingested and absorbed through the skin. Some ingredients may be allergens, neurotoxins or skin irritants. Fragrance commonly contains phthalates which are potent endocrine disruptors.

Who should avoid: Everyone, infants, pregnant women, adolescents and menopausal women.

What to look out for: Fragrance, perfume, parfum.

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Phthalates

What: In fragrance, phthalates are used as dispersers and to prolong the scent. In nail polish they serve to make it more flexible and chip resistant. Again, not necessarily listed on the label. It may be hiding in a fragrance or perfume.

Where: Perfume and most fragrances listed in most products. Nail polish, hair products body products. As well as a slew of household products and plastics.

Why avoid: Health concerns are: Suspected carcinogen, endocrine disruptor, meaning they interfere with the production of hormones. DBP has been found to cause anatomical birth defects to baby boys(!!) and has been correlated to lower sperm count and decreased fertility.

Who should avoid: Everyone especially pregnant and lactating women, infants, children, adolescents, menopausal women.

What to look out for: Fragrance mostly but not always contains phthalates.

Also look for DBP, DEHP, 1,2 benzenedicarboxylate (and variations of), dibutyl/diethyl ester (and variations of). What you do want to find out is if the product is phthalate free, or contains no synthetic fragrance.

Lead, Mercury

What: Metals that may appear as contaminants in certain products. Mercury is an active ingredient of thimerosal which is used as a preservative in mascara.

Where: Lead has been found in a very high portion of lipsticks on the market. Thimerosal in mascara. Lead acetate can be found in some hair dyes.

Why avoid: These metals are both highly toxic and whether ingested or absorbed into the skin can lead to numerous health issues including depression, brain damage, miscarriage, problems with the nervous system.

Who should avoid: Everyone

What to look out for: Thimerosal. But unfortunately mercury and lead aren't normally listed as ingredients themselves because they are contaminants.

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Nano particles

What: Nano technology produces particles that are way smaller than they were intended to be, meaning that if an ingredient is seemingly safe to use in its original form, it may be unsafe to humans and the environment at a size measuring <100 nm.

Where: Used to make the white appearance of physical sunscreens look transparent. Used in makeup to appear finer, face cremes to help them penetrate deeper into the skin which sounds like a good idea but can possibly cause a lot of damage.

Why avoid: Possible health concerns include cancer, bioaccumulation, DNA and cell damage.

Who should avoid: Everyone.

What to look out for: Products advertising nanoparticles or nanotechnology. No labeling laws exist so the best thing is to contact the company and find out if they use these technologies.

Parabens

What: These are cheap preservatives used in most cosmetics to prolong the shelf life of the product.

Where: Pretty much everything, makeup, haircare, skincare. (Parabens have also been found in breast cancer tissue)

Why avoid: Endocrine disruption. Possibly mimicking estrogenic effects.

Who should avoid: Everyone, especially women of child bearing age, infants, adolescents, menopausal women

What to look out for: Methyl/ Propyl/ Butyl/ Isobutyl/ Isopropyl Paraben, Hydrobenzoic acid or hydroxybenzoate or ester.

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Sodium Laurel Sulphate, Sodium Laureth Sulphate

What: An inexpensive foaming agent used to cut through oil

Where: Soap, shampoo, body wash toothpaste, bubble bath baby wash, mascara.

Why avoid: The biggest concern as mentioned earlier is contamination with 1,4 dioxane as well as ethylene oxide. They are a common skin irritant. May be endocrine disruptors.

Who should avoid: Everyone

What to look out for: Sodium lauryl/laureth sulphate, sodium dodecyl sulphate, sodium salt sulfuric acid PEG lauryl sulphate

Toluene

What: A potent solvent and paint thinner.

Where: Nail polishes, nail hardener, some fragrance though it will not be listed.

Why avoid: Potent neurotoxin, immune system toxicity, it's a bone marrow toxin, possible link to leukemia and blood cancer, may cause damage to a developing fetus.

Who should avoid: Everyone, especially pregnant women

What to look out for: Toluene, toluol, methylbenzene, phenylmethane

Sources

<http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/>

<http://nomoredirtylooks.com>

<http://safecosmetics.org>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/maia-james/phthalates-health_b_2464248.html