

THE PRICE WE PAY FOR BEAUTY

PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS THAT WON'T DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH

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Let's face it: all of us want to look the best that we possibly can—and sometimes at any cost. Many of us are even willing to pay excessive amounts of money for products promising to disguise our physical imperfections or minimize the effects of aging.

We are made aware of the risks we take if we choose to go for cosmetic surgery, but how much do we really know about the possible dangers from the personal care products we use? According to the Environmental Working Group, 89 percent of the over ten thousand ingredients used in personal care products have not been evaluated for safety by the FDA. In fact, cosmetics are the least regulated products under the Federal Food, Drug & Cosmetic Act (FFDCA). The government doesn't even require pre-market safety testing review and approval for cosmetics. In effect, we are their trial studies!

To help you safeguard your health, here are some suggestions and guidelines for purchasing personal care products.

Cosmetics

Did you know that cosmetic acne affects one-third of all women between the age of 20 and 50 at one time or another? This is because our skin is permeable, and cosmetic ingredients are completely absorbed through it—especially when left on for long periods of time. Purchase products that contain Vitamins A, C and E as preservatives or grapefruit seed extract oil. Colors derived from plant, animal and mineral sources like annatto seeds, beta-carotene, beet powder, iron oxide and titanium oxide are also recommended. Avoid products containing mineral oil, which is derived from petroleum.

Top pick: Jane Iredale's Mineral Cosmetics (www.janeiredale.com) are mineral-based cosmetics that are so good for your skin they are recommended by plastic surgeons and dermatologists. Iredale's make-up is carried by salons, spas and medical clinics throughout the world and used by many celebrities. The company was awarded an American Spa Professional Choice award in 2005 and is a member of the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics and PETA's cruelty-free program for animals.

Also noteworthy: products by Ecco Bella, Dr. Hauschka and Bare Escentuals.

Hair Shampoos & Conditioners

FDA reports show that shampoos rank among the substances most often reported for causing scalp and eye irritation. In fact, "Skin Deep," a 2004 EWG study and ranking of 7,500 cosmetic products, reported that all of the shampoos tested contained ingredients that have not been assessed for safety. Even products labeled "natural" and "organic" may contain hazardous chemicals, so read labels very carefully.

Top pick: Keune So Pure Hair Care (www.haircareusa.com) products offer "one hundred percent pure plant essential therapy," consisting of over 30 rich plant extracts and essential oils like palm, coconut and olive oil. Through the use of plant extracts, Keune seeks to promote healthy and shiny hair by maintaining a well functioning scalp.

Also noteworthy: Ojon™ Restorative Hair Treatment and hair care products by John Masters Organics, Aubrey Organics, Weleda, Avalon Organics, Logona, Jason and EO hair products.

Hair Dyes

Hair dyes can be the most dangerous personal care products people use. A 2004 report in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* found that the risk of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma was doubled for individuals using darker permanent hair-coloring products for more than 25 years, and one independent report estimates that 69 percent of hair-dye products may pose cancer risks. Although the FDA has issued a warning about coal tar dyes being a possible risk, these ingredients still appear in many hair dyes and strong dandruff shampoos. When selecting dyes, use plant-based hair colors that are composed of raw materials found in nature like indigo, chamomile, walnut, logwood and guar gum. Remember, if your hair dye has a warning label instructing you to avoid the eyebrow area, the product contains ingredients that are dangerous and potentially carcinogenic.

Top pick: John Masters Organics (www.johnmasters.com), a New York City based hair salon, has created a line of products using nontoxic bases blended with essential oils, plant extracts and health food staples. In 2004, their hair products received the Best New Organic Non-Food Product award.

Also noteworthy: Aubrey Organics "Color Me Natural" line, Aveda's color-enhancing shampoos and conditioners and Logona products.

Face & Body Lotions

Our body's protective layer is continuously exposed to the stresses of our surrounding environment. To care for it, we need to nourish our skin with healthful ingredients. Look for products using beeswax, shea butter, jojoba oil, pycnogenol (from pine trees), sweet almond oil, sunflower oil, titanium dioxide, allantoin, urea and vitamins A, C, and E.

Top pick: Ecco Bella (www.eccobella.com) skin care products use certified organic oils, aloe, herbs, pure essential oils and natural minerals that will help revitalize your skin.

Also noteworthy: Skin care products by Aubrey and Logona, L'Occitane's 100% Pure Shea Butter and Dr. Andrew Weil's products for Origins.