

## PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS: CHEMICALS TO AVOID

**Exposure to low levels of lots of different chemicals matters!** A growing body of evidence links synthetic chemicals to the rising incidence of breast cancer. Parabens, phthalates and other hormone disrupting chemicals are found in cosmetics, beauty products and in women's bodies. One third of personal care products contain at least one chemical linked to cancer and brands using these chemicals are sold by many of the same companies that raise money for breast cancer awareness.

These chemicals increase levels of estrogen, alter cell metabolism, and influence the pathways that increase the risk of cancer. These chemicals when inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through the skin, can mimic the effects of estrogen in the body or cause estrogen to act in a way that isn't normal.

Teenage girls are exposed to the chemicals commonly used in cosmetics and body care products and are at a particularly vulnerable age. The eyeliner, lipstick or shampoo they are using probably contains at least one chemical linked to a number of serious health concerns. These exposures can lead to health problems later in life.

### Remember:

- The average adult is exposed to 126 chemicals every day -- just in their personal care products alone.
- What you put on your skin gets absorbed into the blood stream.
- You have a right to know if the products you use contain compounds that may increase your risk of disease, including cancer.

## CHEMICALS TO AVOID

### PARABENS (*Methylparaben, propylparaben*)

Mimics estrogen, known to play a role in the development of breast cancers. May alter hormone levels; alter reproductive development. Some studies have found parabens in breast tumors. (*Parabens may not be labelled so look for "free-of" label claims if you want to avoid them*)

Shampoos, soaps, shaving gels, nail creams, facial masks, cleansing gels, bubble bath, toothpaste, baby lotions, cosmetics, moisturizers, hand and body lotions and beauty creams, skin and hair conditioners, mascara

### PHTHALATES (Check our website: [www. BreastCancerOptions.org](http://www.BreastCancerOptions.org) for a phthalate-free List)

Estrogen-mimicking chemicals used as plastic softeners and solvents. Found in hairspray, hair gel, hair mousse, fragrances, deodorants, and nail polish as well as most plastic products including plastic bottles, PVC plastics, and plastic toys. (*Phthalates may not be labelled so look for "free-of" label claims if you want to avoid them*)

Found in: Hair spray, deodorant, nail polish, hair gel, mousse, lotions, children's toys, perfumes, fragrances, plastics, cosmetics

**PLACENTAL EXTRACT OR ESTROGEN** Advertised to promote growth and thickness of hair and marketed to African-American women and girls. Placental extracts are tainted with hormones posing a danger to young girls as well as the rest of us. Excess progesterone and estrogen has been linked to breast, ovarian and reproductive cancers. It induces early puberty which is a risk factor for breast cancer later in life.

Any product with *Placenta, Estrogen or Hormone* in the list of ingredients

Shampoos, styling gels, cosmetics and cream rinses, toners/astringents, anti-aging creams.

### FRAGRANCE (May include phthalates, synthetic musks (which disrupt hormones); ethylene oxide (a mammary carcinogen).

Perfumes and scented cosmetics

Hormone disruptor. Accumulates in the body and shows up in the fat, blood, and breast milk of women who wore perfumes that contained it. Helps chemicals absorb into the skin. Most "fragrances" are synthetic and are either cancer-causing or otherwise toxic.

\* *Companies are not required to list these chemicals on product labels.*

### SUNSCREENS (octinoxate, oxybenzone, sulisobenzene)

Sunscreens, hair spray, face cream, fragrance & perfume, shampoo, conditioner, liquid hand soap, foundation, lipstick, insect repellent, nail polish, polish remover, aftershave and shaving cream.

Has estrogenic activity. Blocks the creation of essential vitamin D that the human body needs to prevent breast cancer.

## SOLUTIONS

**Learn to Read Labels:** By law all skin care products must be labeled with the ingredients in descending order of their quantity in the product. A good rule of thumb is to divide the ingredient list into thirds: the top third usually contains 90–95% of the product, the middle third usually contains 5-8% and the bottom third, 1–3%.

- **Choose natural ingredients made from vegetable dyes** such as henna, annatto, beta carotene, chlorophyll.
- **Use pure essential oils instead of perfume.**
- **Choose products with safer preservatives:** grapefruit seed extract; phenoxyethanol, potassium sorbate, sorbic acid, vitamin E (tocopherol), vitamin A (retinyl), vitamin C (ascorbic acid)
- **Use Mineral based cosmetics and hair dyes with natural vegetable colors.**
- **Avoid use of paraben-containing preservatives, especially for those breast cancer survivors who are strongly Estrogen Receptor positive.**
- **Avoid all scented products or choose good quality essential oils**