



## CHEMICALS IN COSMETICS AND SKIN CARE TO AVOID

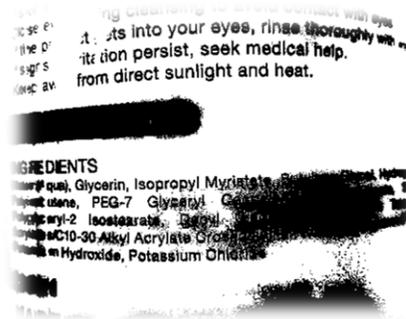
By Nilufer Gadgieva

There is a lot of fuss in the media about makeup and skin care in today's world, not surprisingly. The use of these products for either health or beauty purposes has stuck around for centuries and will continue to exist as a never-ending trend throughout the ages to come. However, one thing that draws the line between the generations are the rampant usage of chemically infested and sometimes even dangerous makeup ingredients, leading to an array of allergies, inflammation and skin diseases, originate from a series of testing conducted on animals and even contribute to production pollution.

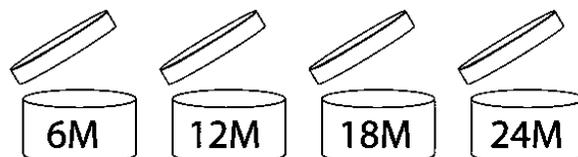
Especially in North America, where our FDA doesn't deem them dangerous relative to those in Europe, it is essential to be aware of ingredients and labels to stray away from during our hunt for the most vibrant beauty products, and this quick guide should help.

To begin with, here are a few things to watch out for when you pick up a bottle/tube off the counter for literally ANY cosmetic/hygienic purpose:

- **Ingredient List** → be aware that everything in the market today, ranging from packaged food to deodorant, are aligned in most to the least. If you spot a dirty word within the first five ingredients or so, you don't want to go anywhere near it. That goes out for concentrations of specific ingredients well, some of which need a minimum amount to be effective.
- **Expiration** → like food (and most everything else), all good things must come to an end. On everything, from lotions to lipsticks to nail polish, an expiry date is present on the packaging and one must take great care to use the product within the range of its potency. They may



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appear as such, indicating that the product is safe to use within \_\_\_\_ (M), or months, after opening.

- **Packaging** → when considering the environment at large, it is important to ensure that the packaging of your products come in recyclable form and that they are disposed of appropriately, including plastics and metals. It is also a plus to consider that plastic containers and packaging is usually a blow to our health as well – keep an eye out for BPA-free plastic.
- **Labels** → a great marketing technique is to throw out words like “natural” or “organic” to draw consumers. This technique ironically feeds on the fact that most consumers



subconsciously want to live cleaner and uses this against the less aware. If you spot a product labeled as such, ensure that the ingredient list is comprised almost completely of genuine organic ingredients and not a series of rubbish!

And finally, among countless numbers of chemicals to list, here are the top 5 ingredients to look out for if you're willing to take back your health and make your skin care routine a breeze in the long run:

1. Parabens:

One of the most common preservatives in cosmetic products to date at 75-90% precedence, parabens are found in a variety of lotions, hair care products and facial cleansers as well. They are - literally - in everything we use on the daily, acting as antibacterial preservatives, and can easily penetrate the skin and mucous membranes

Parabens have a devastating long-term effect on estrogen levels in women, who are exposed to at least 50 mg of parabens per day, wreaking havoc on the endocrine system. Clinical trials have pointed to the fact that parabens may cause further aging and may draw the link between cosmetic use and breast and other reproductive forms cancer in women and men alike.

Possibly the worst part about parabens is that manufacturers knowingly refuse to place them on labels and this can go unnoticed a majority of the time, therefore consider purchasing directly paraben-free cosmetics and watch out for ingredients labeled with the **-paraben** suffix!

2. Formaldehyde:

Also known as formaldehyde-releasing preservatives (FRP's), this chemical is used as a germicide, much like it's sister paraben, and is found in many popular cosmetics, particularly nail polish and nail treatments, not to mention household detergents and cleansers. FRP's release small bits of formaldehyde in a gradual fashion and are usually inhaled and gassed-off from said products.

The International Agency for Research on Carcinogens (IARC) has labeled it as a genuine Class A carcinogen, and is responsible for a variety of ENT, blood and lung cancers, severe allergic reactions, and has detrimental effects on the immune system.

Watch out for ingredients labeled as **methenamine, DMDM hydantoin, sodium hydroxymethylglycinate, and quaternium-15.**

3. Sodium Lauryl Sulfate:

SLS is possibly the most notorious and better known of harmful chemicals out in the market today. It's mainly found in hair products, anti-acne products and lotions, especially foaming substances, but you could occasionally find it in your foundation and bronzer too. Again, SLS is known to be generally carcinogenic or contains carcinogenic properties when interacting with other specific chemicals.

SLS can cause dermatitis, lung irritation, severe allergic reactions, urinary tract infections and itchy eyes as well. It's a pothole of disasters, in short, and to make things worse it lingers long after disposal in the environment (and in our bodies). Take note to purchase SLS-free products and keep an eye out for ingredients with the suffix **-eth** included.

4. Triclosan:

This chemical, found in toothpaste, deodorant, household disinfectant and soap, is also an infamous endocrine disruptor, targeting the reproductive organs and thyroid gland. As a strong antibacterial, it is also linked with antibiotic resistance in humans, as well as responsible for causing muscle damage.

Moreover, triclosan is known to cause detrimental damage to marine life when disposed of in copious quantities, as it reacts with water to produce a carcinogen. Pregnant women should particularly watch out for triclosan, as it is passed through breast milk to the child and can also be fetotoxic in the long run. These ingredients may be labeled as **triclosan (TSC)** and/or **triclocarban (TCC)**

5. BHA/BHT:

You can easily spot butylated compounds by their labels as **BHA** (Butylated Hydroxyanisole) and **BHT** (Butylated Hydroxytoluene). These bad boys mimic antioxidants and can be found in lipsticks and lip stains, sunscreen, and other creams in the form of preservatives. They are also - shockingly - found in processed food products.

These chemicals have been proven to be a carcinogen, endocrine and hormone disrupter and an environmental toxin that stays much longer than expected, BHA/BHTs additionally pose a considerable risk of organ-toxicity as well.