

## Hidden Dangers Lurking In Your Personal Care Products

Klaus Ferlow—11/2006

**All but the most natural toiletries and cosmetics on the market contain dangerous poisons, disguised under unintelligible names on the label. Herbalist, Klaus Ferlow, investigates.**

**WERE YOU AWARE THAT** the cosmetics industry in North America is big business with over \$35-40 billion in sales each year? Their products are sold mostly with "brainwashing" type of advertising in the multimedia, television, radio, magazines, newspapers, etc. Lots of claims are made how good the products are at rejuvenating the skin by reducing wrinkles, lines, etc. But do you really know what the ingredients are in these products? Even if listed on the product label...do you understand for example what sodium lauryl sulfate, propylene glycol, mineral oil mean?

The "flowery" and often misleading language of cosmetics advertising tells you very little about the actual effectiveness. In Canada there is no labeling law so manufacturers can deceive the consumer. In the U.S. the law provides for mandatory labeling of ingredients, but only chemists understand their purpose and dermatologists their problems. It seems that a large percentage of the population is suffering adverse consequences when using cosmetic products containing many harmful chemicals and synthetic ingredients.

US researchers report that one in eight of the 82,000 ingredients used in personal care products are industrial chemicals inclusive carcinogens, pesticides, reproductive toxins, and hormone disruptors. Many products include plasticizers (chemicals that keep concrete soft), detergents (used to grime off auto parts) and surfactants (they reduce the tension in water, like in paint and inks). Imagine what that does to your skin and the environment.

The purpose of this article is to offer alternative methods of caring for your hair and skin. We are actively involved in the manufacture of truly natural herbal creams, lotions, shampoo and spray with premium quality botanical herbal extracts which are certified organic, organic, or wild-crafted without synthetics, artificial colour, scents or preservatives. Available only through professional Health & Wellness practitioners.

We would like to inform you of the various chemicals by name, where they come from, and what they can do for your skin and hair. Be aware that there are over 1000 chemicals available for use in cosmetics that have toxic substances and are dangerous to your health and well-being. Source: The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.

Large corporations in the personal-care industry are interested in the promotion and profit potential of their products, not your health. They are selling an image, not necessarily a safe and effective product. You have to ask yourself what "New & Improved" means on the label. Aren't you overwhelmed by all the claims made promoting their "natural" skincare products? Many of the so-called new and improved products are old formulas in flashy new packaging designed to appeal to today's consumer. All this does is up the price, not the quality.

Companies selling personal care products hide controversial or dangerous ingredients under the label of "trade secrets". Because of intense competition in the industry, if a company believes it uses an ingredient that is relatively new to the industry or makes their product unique, it can petition the FDA (in Canada the

HPB - Health Protection Branch) to prevent disclosure of that ingredient by granting trade secret status. This spells delight for the company and disaster for you!

Many people are very health and beauty conscious and are willing to spend large amounts of money on cosmetics promising firming of sagging skin, removing wrinkles, nourishing the starving skin and/or removing blemishes. Brand name cosmetics companies have developed a large profitable industry selling products that imply these, and other non-existing and impossible virtues and cures! Every cosmetic product on the market is formulated for a shelf life of over three years, therefore it contains a large amount (usually four synthetic parabens) of preservatives to prevent spoilage. These preservatives are cellular toxins, otherwise they could not kill microbes. They do penetrate the skin to a certain extent and many of them have been shown to cause allergic reactions and dermatitis! Over 90% of all ingredients in commercially available cosmetic products are of synthetic origin with all the associated health risks. On the other hand there is a wealth of information and practical knowledge available about NATURAL products because they have been used for thousands of years starting with aboriginal and native peoples.

In North America literally thousands of people are suffering from adverse effects when using cosmetic products and most people don't associate burning, reddening of the skin or pimples, rashes with a cosmetic product they are using. People simply discontinue to use the product but seldom report it to the FDA or HPB. Many chemicals used in cosmetics never cause signs of toxicity on the skin, but contain potent systemic toxins.

Finally a list of cosmetic chemicals that have caused adverse effects was first published for the general public in the book "Health Risks in Today's Cosmetics". The book contains the surprising results of a recently conducted sample survey of the estimated 20,000 different off-the-shelf cosmetic products for sale in the U.S. and over 80% of the products surveyed contained one or more ingredients that have caused documented adverse reactions in humans and animals in the past! Best advice: carefully read the ingredient label of all products, comparing them against a list of reportedly harmful ingredients or contaminants. Only if enough consumers do just that, will products that contain harmful substances eventually disappear from the marketplace.

How often have you seen the words "Natural" or "Hypo-allergenic" on the front of a skincare product? Cosmetic companies use slick advertising to convince you that you are buying a safe product. There are no industry-wide standards for what the word "Natural" refers to. Every week companies introduce new products (what about the "old" ones?) which are supposed to be better, more effective, healthier but are they really? A quote from the Boston Globe, September 6, 1997:

"The General Accounting Office, the investigative branch of Congress, has identified more than 125 cosmetic ingredients suspected of causing cancer - and others that may cause birth defects"!

What can you do to protect yourself and your family? Read labels and learn to decipher some of the chemical jargon. An explanation of many chemicals that are hazardous to your skin and health follows this article. Understanding the long-term effects of these dangerous chemicals and which products contain them is the first step in avoiding disastrous results for you and your loved ones. If nothing else, this information will make you a more informed consumer, one aware of potential health risks. Most importantly it could save your life.

## KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN.

Many toothpaste and soap companies include this warning on their labels, "Not for use by children under 6". What you may not realize is the dangers in your home are just as likely to harm your children as anything outside. Products that your children use every day may contain ingredients that studies have linked to cancer, blindness, and even death. One of the most widespread of these chemicals is SODIUM LAURYL SULFATE (SLS). Manufacturers primarily use it because it is inexpensive and readily available. Some products that can contain SLS are: shampoo, soap, toothpaste and lotions. You are probably aware that your children's toothpaste contains fluoride because that's what dentists have recommended for years to prevent cavities. However, most toothpaste contains enough fluoride in four ounces to kill a small child! In 1990 a study stated that fluoride has been shown to NOT reduce cavities and now scientists are linking fluoride to dental deformity, arthritis, allergic reactions and about 10,000 unnecessary deaths each year from cancer. Fluoride can corrode the tooth enamel and research indicates that it can lead to Crohn's disease when swallowing toothpaste.

In the same category is mouthwash. Did you know that some mouthwash contains even higher concentrations of alcohol than beer, wine and liquor. Containing more than 25% alcohol, can be dangerous to young children - one ounce can cause seizures and brain damage and five ounces can kill! According to the National Cancer Institute, mouthwash with over 25% alcohol concentration increases the risk of oral and throat cancer by 60% for men and 90% for women than those who do not use mouthwash.

Another dangerous product is propylene glycol, an ingredient that is commonly used as a humectant (additive to keep products moist). It is an inexpensive glycerine substitute. Propylene glycol is bad enough for you skin but has also been seen in commercially made baked goods such as muffins to keep them moist for a long time. Consumers beware.

Some women experience rashes, eczema, and/or acne from using cosmetics loaded with synthetic ingredients. Occasionally they use the same irritating product to try to alleviate the problem but are actually making it worse! When young women start using makeup - some really overdo it and the synthetics in the products are absorbed into their skin. This dries the skin and changes the pH level (pH refers to the acid or alkaline level of a product which is determined by the amount of hydrogen in various ingredients). Normal hair and skin have a pH between 4.0 and 6.0, or slightly acidic. Synthetic cosmetic products will change the pH allowing secondary infections to occur. Acne is a widespread problem and results from an increased production of sebum (oils of the skin) which blocks pores. Those suffering from acne need to keep their skin clean and use only natural products with certified organic/organic or wild-crafted herbal extracts. Of course some of us are more prone to acne from previous generations. Open, unclogged pores and a balanced diet help considerably. Certain preservatives, artificial fragrances, colours and mineral oils can cause itchy rashes, skin damage, and asthma-like symptoms. The origin of a significant portion of dermatological complaints can be traced back to a chemical or non-natural substance applied to the skin.

## SHAMPOO CAN MAKE OR BREAK YOUR HAIR

Everyone uses hair shampoo on a anywhere from a weekly to daily basis. Complaints about irritation from shampoo are among the most frequent made to the FDA/HPB and to manufacturers. People often complain about various brands of shampoo that have caused various conditions such as scalp irritation, hair loss, eye irritation, and severe hair damage. The vast majority of commercially available shampoos are loaded with chemicals that are hazardous to your skin and health! Have you ever wondered why we have a higher

percentage of brain tumors among the population in North America than elsewhere in the world. Scientific studies have proven that Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS) found in most shampoos damages protein formation in the eyes. After damage has been done, SLS even retards the healing process. Kenneth Gree, PH.D., D.Sc. of the Medical College of Georgia warns that eyes affected by SLS take five times as long to heal. SLS can lead to cataract formation and eventually blindness. Not only from direct eye contact but through skin absorption over the long-term. Many varieties of shampoo are designed to treat dandruff and flaky scalp conditions but these contain coal tar. You won't find it on the label, however. It is listed as FD&C or D&C colour. Our youngest son Harald, works in a hair salon. Without the use of rubber gloves he would suffer serious skin problems from washing and dyeing client's hair.

Shampoo sales are over 2 billion dollars in North America each year. There are many manufacturers offering an incredible assortment of products. Recently I checked some of the large chain and drug stores and was amazed that approximately 70-80% of the shampoos and conditioners had no ingredients listing (in the U.S. the law mandates an accurate ingredient listing). It seems that most of the products on Canadian store shelves (without proper labeling) are from the U.S. The remaining products which did have ingredient shown listed many synthetics and chemicals. The consumer really has no alternative in these stores.

There are alternatives available! Consumers can purchase toxin free natural herbal products.

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