

FACT SHEET

Potentially Toxic Chemicals in Personal Care Products

TOXIN	PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS CONTAINING TOXIN	SCIENTIFIC LINKS
Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA)	Makeup	BHA is classified by the National Toxicology program as being “reasonably assumed to be a human carcinogen” and has been shown to cause stomach cancer in rats, mice, and hamsters as well as liver cancer in fish.
Formaldehyde	Salon hair-straightening products ¹² and nail hardeners	Formaldehyde has been classified as “known to be a human carcinogen” by the National Toxicology program. Occupational exposure, typically respiratory, has been scientifically linked to nasopharyngeal cancer, sinonasal cancer, and lymphohematopoietic cancer, specifically myeloid leukemia.
1,4-Dioxane	Foaming products (shampoo, body wash), lotions	1,4-Dioxane is created as a byproduct during the manufacturing process, and has been identified as a “probable human carcinogen” by the EPA. ¹³ In lab animals, high levels of 1,4-dioxane exposure has led to various complications, including liver and kidney damage.
Parabens	Makeup, moisturizers, hair care products, and shaving products	Parabens are possible endocrine disruptors, with potential immune or allergenic effects. Paraben exposure has been shown to increase migratory and invasive activity of human breast cancer cells in vitro. High levels of urinary parabens have also been statistically linked with sperm DNA damage and lower levels of reproductive hormones in men.
Phthalates	Perfumes, hair sprays, soap, shampoo, nail polish, and skin moisturizers	High urinary concentrations of certain phthalates in pregnant women have been linked to problems with reproductive development in male fetuses and increased prevalence of ADHD in children. Exposure to some phthalates has also been linked to sperm DNA damage in adult men.
Toluene	Nail polish, salon hair treatments	Toluene exposure can cause cognitive and behavioral changes in mice. Humans exposed to high levels can show central nervous system depression, neurobehavioral impairment, and upper respiratory tract irritation. With massive exposure, accumulation of fluid in the lungs and respiratory arrest may ensue.
Triclosan	Toothpaste	High levels of urinary triclosan have been linked to higher prevalence of hay fever and allergies in children, which suggests a negative effect on the human immune system. Triclosan has also been shown to suppress thyroid hormones in lab rats.
Sodium Laurethsulfate (SLS)	Toothpaste, soap, shampoos, bath products, and moisturizers	Human exposure can lengthen duration and increase pain in patients with certain kinds of ulcers. ²⁶ Contamination with 1,4 dioxane may occur. It is considered an eye, skin, and lung irritant.

For a full list of references, visit www.nyhealthfoundation.org/ToxicChemicals.