

THE MOST COMMON PROBLEM SYNTHETIC INGREDIENTS

The average woman tries to keep things in balance; gets enough exercise, eats sensibly most of the time and thinks she has a healthy lifestyle. Yet on a typical day she may apply up to 175 different synthetic chemicals to her body! Not to mention those inhaled from fly spray, cars' exhaust and the chimneys of manufacturing plants, swallowed in the water and ingested in foods and drinks with artificial additives! Some may suggest this is not a big deal, but our bodies were not designed to process synthetics.

Everything is made of chemicals, and not all synthetic chemicals are evil. After all, in medicinal form they are desirable when the alternative is certain and rapid death! We can't escape all artificial chemicals, but it's so easy to dramatically cut down how many enter our body, where many become trapped permanently.

We don't eat natural but poisonous substances, or eat plastic for our food because we know it has no nutritive value, and it is really *really* bad for us! As skin directly feeds by absorption, what we apply should be not be 'junk food' for the skin. But it is more difficult to decipher the ingredients list on a bronzer jar than on a food label, and almost every ingredient name sounds scary – even the natural safe ones!

The most commonly used synthetics in cosmetics are highly effective at the job they do. Such as to lather, perfume and preserve. And they are cheap. But as with Thalidomide in the 50's, once thought safe, many are now known to be harmful, and others simply haven't had enough time to reveal over several generations what their full potential side-effects may be. There are completely natural and safe alternatives being used however in many brands that lather, smell sensational and last perfectly until they're all used up – no compromising at all!

So what are the most common nasties, and why should you avoid them?

Parabens. Preservatives used in shampoo, foundation, moisturisers – concerns relate to them being hormone disruptors, have been linked to breast cancer and skin inflammations. These are readily absorbed ingredients and include methylparaben, propylparaben, ethylparaben and butylparaben.

Sodium Lauryl Sulphate and Sodium Laureth Sulphate are foaming agents. Used in shampoos, toothpaste and even sensitive skin cleansers these are harsh skin irritants and can stimulate and aggravate acne, rosacea and irritation. Other possible side effects are natural oil and moisture loss, and eye irritation.

Formaldehyde. Found in shampoos and handwashes. A skin irritant and is linked to asthma and headaches.

Imidazolidiny Urea (Imid Urea) A preservative. Formaldehyde-forming, it can cause joint pain, allergies, depression, headaches, chronic fatigue, chest pain, dizziness, insomnia, asthma, weaken the immune system and is linked to cancer.

Propylene Glycol is commonly used in skincare, makeup, shampoo, toothpaste and baby products. It is a humectant - added to keep creams moist rather than drying and solidify. Used to help hydrate the skin, but in areas of low humidity it has been shown to be counterproductive and contribute to dehydration by drawing moisture from the deeper layer of the skin. Once seen low down on many ingredient lists, it is often a major ingredient. It has rapid skin penetration.

FD&C and D&C colors. Possible side effects include allergy and formation of carcinogens in the body. Their exact ingredients do not require specifying on labels. They are allowed by the U.S. FDA to include mercury, lead and arsenic (which are excellent colouring agents) in parts per million which although small build up with frequent daily applications such as with lipstick.

Mineral Oil is a derivative of crude oil (petroleum) that is used industrially as a cutting fluid and lubricant. It forms an oily film over the skin to lock in moisture, but also toxins and wastes, and hinders normal skin respiration by blocking skin. It can stimulate and aggravate acne, rosacea and irritation. Creating a 'Cling Wrap' effect it prevents nutrient absorption.

Phthalates are found in a wide variety of cosmetics, from nail polish, hair spray, mascara, fragrances, hair care, antiperspirants, and sunscreen. Used because they held the product to adhere better to the skin. Even some foods like confectionary and chewing gum may contain them. They are linked to a variety of problems, including reproductive and developmental harm, organ damage, immune suppression, endocrine disruption and cancer from being absorbed or inhaled. Phthalates are banned from use in cosmetics in Europe.

