



Environmental Working Group's  
**SHOPPER'S GUIDE TO  
 SAFE  
 COSMETICS**

## PLAY IT SAFE

With no required safety testing, cosmetics companies can use almost any chemical they want, regardless of risks. Always read product labels before you buy.

### TOP 6 INGREDIENTS TO AVOID

1. Fragrance
2. Alpha & Beta Hydroxy Acids (AHAs, BHAs, lactic acid, glycolic acid)
3. Parabens (methylparaben, propylparaben)
4. Triethanolamine
5. Iodopropynyl butylcarbamate
6. Triclosan (antimicrobial liquid soap)

## 5 WAYS TO SHOP SAFE

- 1 Use plain soap. Avoid bath or beauty bars with fragrance, dyes, and preservatives.
- 2 Don't trust the claims. Manufacturers don't have to back up terms like dermatologist-tested, natural, and organic. Read the ingredients.
- 3 Buy fragrance-free products. Products with "fragrance" on the ingredient list may contain chemicals linked to allergies and reproductive problems.
- 4 Avoid products with proprietary or trademarked ingredients like "preservatives" or "colors" that can contain chemicals of concern.
- 5 Simpler is generally safer. Fewer ingredients usually means lower risks.

## NAIL POLISH

Phthalates, common ingredients in nail polish, have been linked to reproductive deformities in boys whose mothers have been exposed.

### AVOID TOP 6 INGREDIENTS, PLUS

Dibutyl phthalate  
 Formaldehyde  
 Toluene

### SAFER WAYS TO USE NAIL POLISH

Use in well-ventilated areas  
 Don't use when pregnant

## SUNSCREEN

Apply frequently, especially after swimming, sweating, or towel drying. Sufficient iodine in your diet will protect against possible thyroid risks from some sunscreen ingredients.

### AVOID TOP 6 INGREDIENTS, PLUS

Padimate-O  
 PABA

### LOW-RISK INGREDIENTS

Titanium Dioxide  
 Zinc Oxide

## HAIR DYE

Hairdressers and women who regularly use dark, permanent hair dye may be at risk for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and bladder cancer.

### PRODUCTS TO AVOID

Dark, permanent hair dyes

### LOW-RISK PRODUCTS

Light-colored hair dyes used infrequently

## SKIN LIGHTENERS

Skin lighteners contain ingredients that cause allergic reactions and pose cancer concerns.

### AVOID TOP 6 INGREDIENTS, PLUS

Hydroquinone  
Sodium nitrate

### SAFER WAYS TO USE SKIN LIGHTENERS

Avoid these products or use infrequently

## ANTI-AGING

Anti-aging products often contain acids that destroy skin structure, accelerating skin aging over time, and possibly increasing skin cancer risk.

### AVOID TOP 6 INGREDIENTS, PLUS

Lactic Acid and Glycolic Acid  
AHA (Alpha hydroxy acid)  
BHA (Beta hydroxy acid)

### SAFER WAYS TO USE ANTI-AGING PRODUCTS

Avoid these products or use infrequently

## SUNLESSTANNING

Sunless tanning doesn't protect the skin from harmful UV rays and may contain ingredients that pose cancer risks.

### AVOID TOP 6 INGREDIENTS, PLUS

Dihydroxy acetone  
Coumarin

### SAFER WAYS TO USE SUNLESSTANNERS

Use infrequently, if at all  
Use a sunscreen even though you look tan

# LEARN MORE

Search the Skin Deep database.

Don't see your product among the high-risk categories highlighted here? Avoid the top six ingredients, and for more tips on lower risk products, go to [www.ewg.org/skindeep/](http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/).

Subscribe to EWG's e-newsletter.

Sign up at [www.ewg.org/newsletter/subscribe/](http://www.ewg.org/newsletter/subscribe/).

Support our work.

Help us maintain our Skin Deep database by

donating at [www.ewg.org/donate/](http://www.ewg.org/donate/).

