

Sophie Uliano's list of

TOXIC BEAUTY INGREDIENTS

that you absolutely must avoid

BUTYLATED COMPOUNDS

(BHT, BHA)

BHT and BHA are popular toxic cosmetic ingredients that are used in many products across industries as preservatives. Preservatives are used to help extend the shelf life of products and are typically one of the most debated toxic cosmetic ingredients. In cosmetics, you'll commonly find BHT and BHA in many beauty products. One of the main issues with BHT and BHA is that they may cause skin allergies and have also been connected to toxicity affecting organs and the reproductive system.

COAL TAR

The name alone sounds as if it belongs on an asphalt highway! Coal tar is a toxic cosmetic ingredient that is commonly used as a colorant but has been found in many products that treat dry hair and skin conditions. You won't find the exact words 'coal tar' on any product labels but, instead you'll want to look out for the text "FD&C" followed by a color and a number. While coal tar is a prominent ingredient in many color cosmetics it makes our toxic cosmetic ingredients lists for the reasons that it's one of the most easily contaminated colorants. Many times, coal tar is found to be tainted with heavy metals that are particularly toxic to the brain. When not contaminated, coal tar isn't exactly safe either.

FORMALDEHYDE-RELEASING PRESERVATIVES

This is another preservative. Unlike the aforementioned preservative, formaldehyde-releasing preservatives are preservatives that once broken down, release formaldehyde gas, which is carcinogenic. Again, you won't see the words "formaldehyde-releasing preservative" on an ingredient label so you'll have to do a little detective work when it comes to this one. A common one is quaternium-15 which is found in many cosmetic products, such as mascara. These preservatives are especially worrying for those with allergies and/or skin sensitivity.

FRAGRANCE

OR PARFUM

When you notice 'fragrance/parfum' on a product label, it's highly likely there are a number of hidden toxic cosmetic ingredients. Fragrance is found across cosmetics, hair, skin, and body care products and it's one of the most tricky to discuss because a fragrance can technically be any mixture of ingredients. In fact, there are over 3,000 ingredients that can be classified as fragrance. Look for fragrance-free, or a product that is scented with pure essential oils.

LEAD

It's crazy that this byproduct is still found in foundation and lipstick. Lead is usually a byproduct of contamination from other color additives. Lead is still found in many major name brands.

PARABENS

Parabens are probably the most well known toxic cosmetic ingredient as it is one of the ingredients that many mainstream brands have been intentionally removing from their products. Today, it's not surprising to see a shampoo bottle or foundation compact proudly displaying that it's "paraben-free". Parabens are a type of preservative that is found in countless cosmetic products. So why are parabens on everyone's most toxic cosmetic ingredients list? Well, for starters, they are extremely easy to be absorbed through the skin. And once they've entered your body, they have been linked to issues with the nervous system, immune system, and reproductive system. They are endocrine disruptors.

PEG COMPOUNDS

PEG compounds are a potentially toxic cosmetic ingredient that is used in many cosmetic products to improve penetration and absorption. For example, those moisturizers that claim to penetrate deep beneath the skin for optimal hydration. The problem with PEG compounds is that they can be contaminated with other toxic ingredients during processing, and since their purpose is to drive ingredients deeper into the skin, this could be an issue. To identify PEG compounds in your products look for ingredients with “eth” in them like polyethylene glycol.

PHTHALATES

Phthalates are used to maintain color, scent and texture. They are very often hidden under the term “Fragrance/Parfum” on an ingredient list. Phthalates have been linked to development issues and neurological damage. They have also been connected to reproductive problems in both women and men.

SULFATES

These are most commonly known as SLS (Sodium Lauryl Sulfate). Sulfates are what gives many traditional cleansing products their foamy, soapy characteristic. Sulfates have been linked to respiratory and skin issues. It's also common for sulfates to be contaminated with certain carcinogens so it's best to avoid them altogether.

TRICLOSAN

Triclosan is a toxic ingredient found in many personal care products. It is a pesticide that is used in many antibacterial products. It is an endocrine disruptor, and is extremely detrimental to the environment.

1,4-DIOXANE

1,4-dioxane is a carcinogen that is used to lessen the effect of other harsh chemicals. It's never listed on a product label but you can identify products that might be affected by avoiding products that contain ingredients with "eth" in them. A study done by the EWG concluded that 57% of baby washes distributed in the United States contained this toxic cosmetic ingredient.