

The Dirty Dozen

Some of the chemicals found in personal care products can, in fact, be quite toxic, not only to the environment, but also to our bodies - chemicals applied to the skin can be absorbed directly into the blood stream.

U.S. researchers have now identified 10,500 industrial chemicals used as cosmetic ingredients, including carcinogens, pesticides, reproductive toxics, endocrine disruptors, plasticizers, degreasers and surfactants. Recently, the David Suzuki Foundation identified twelve of the worst offenders and coined them "The Dirty Dozen"; all of these ingredients have been linked to health and environmental concerns, including cancer, reproductive disorders, asthma and severe allergies. Almost 80% of products on the market contain at least one of these *Dirty Dozen* ingredients.

Here is a list of these top 12 culprits and their potential effects on the body and the environment:

1. **BHA and BHT:** Used mainly in moisturizers and makeup as preservatives. Suspected endocrine disruptors and may cause cancer (BHA). Harmful to fish and other wildlife.
2. **Coal Tar Dyes:** p-phenylenediamine and colours listed as "CI" followed by five digits. P-phenylenediamine is used in some hair dyes; other colours are used in a variety of cosmetics. Potential to cause cancer and may be contaminated with heavy metals toxic to the brain.
3. **DEA-related ingredients:** Used in some creamy and foaming products, such as moisturizers and shampoos. Can react to form nitrosamines, which may cause cancer. Harmful to fish and other wildlife.
4. **Dibutyl phthalate:** Used as a plasticizer in some nail care products. Suspected endocrine disrupter and reproductive toxicant. Harmful to fish and other wildlife.
5. **Formaldehyde-releasing preservatives:** Used in a variety of cosmetics. Slowly release small amounts of formaldehyde, which causes cancer.
6. **Paraben, methylparaben, butylparaben and propylparaben:** Used in a variety of cosmetics as preservatives. Suspected endocrine disrupters and may interfere with male reproductive functions.
7. **Parfum:** Any mixture of fragrance ingredients used in a variety of cosmetics. Some fragrance ingredients can trigger allergies and asthma. Some linked to cancer and neurotoxicity. Some harmful to fish and other wildlife.
8. **PEGs (e.g., PEG -60):** Used in some cosmetic cream bases. Can be contaminated with 1,4-dioxane, which may cause cancer.
9. **Petrolatum:** Used in some hair products for shine and as a moisture barrier in some lip balms, lip sticks and moisturizers. Can be contaminated with polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which may cause cancer.
10. **Siloxanes:** Used in a variety of cosmetics to soften, smooth and moisten. Suspected endocrine disrupter and reproductive toxicant (cyclotetrasiloxane). Harmful to fish and other wildlife.
11. **Sodium laureth sulfate:** Used in some foaming cosmetics, such as shampoos, cleansers and bubble bath. Can be contaminated with 1,4-dioxane, which may cause cancer.
12. **Triclosan:** Used in some antibacterial cosmetics, such as toothpastes, cleansers and deodorants. Suspected endocrine disrupter and may contribute to antibiotic resistance in bacteria. Harmful to fish and other wildlife.

As with the food we put in our bodies, we should also be reading the labels on the products we put on them!