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The Dirt On Personal Care Products

In an age when slapping more products on our hair, face and body is thought to make you 'squeaky clean' and 'beautiful', it may be worth considering exactly what these products are made of and how they are affecting our bodies and our environment. Warning: reading this article may change the way you consume forever.

- Conventional cosmetic and skincare products contain a huge variety of chemicals, some of which have been listed as probable and definite carcinogens, irritants, toxins, teratogens (substances that cause foetal developmental defects) and mutagens (substances that change DNA).
- We are told that these chemicals are safe and that they are only present in small doses in most products. Unfortunately nobody knows what the long term consequence of using these products several times a day for your entire life does. Some have been found to accumulate in the body, others have been found to cause serious DNA damage.
- The skin is the largest organ of the body and approximately 60% of what we put onto our skin can be absorbed. In addition to that we inhale the vapours of these products and often ingest some too. Yes Lipstick on the teeth may be more than a first date dilemma!
- Some chemicals may appear safe in isolation, but are they safe when combined with the other chemicals in the product or the environment? Cosmetic companies claim there are too many chemicals used to allow testing of each in combination with all other possibilities. This is true, so why don't they just reduce the number of chemicals in use.
- Regulators usually say that a chemical is safe until proven to be harmful. Firstly I would suggest that there appears to be significant evidence to substantiate the harmful qualities of many chemicals used in personal care products. Secondly, do we really need to wait, given the past history with asbestosis and tobacco? Would it not be more logical to consider them harmful, until proven safe?
- Not only do many of the conventional products cause significant health and safety risks, most of them will actually make your hair and skin dryer or oilier, therefore encouraging continual use.
- It is a myth that the chemicals in personal care products are necessary. An ever growing number of companies are now producing a range of low chemical, chemical free and organic cosmetics. The main reason companies choose chemicals over health is COST. It seems nasty chemicals are the cheapest of all!
- There is around 70 thousand chemicals currently in commercial use and approximately 1000 new chemicals are added each year. Of these approximately 9000 chemicals are regularly used in the cosmetics industry. Although those with known harmful effects are applied only in small quantities to comply with health and safety regulations, the long term and cumulative effects of frequent small doses are not yet known.
- In the US there are no compulsory safety tests for cosmetics. The legislation stipulates that the products must be safe, however what 'safe' is, is at the discretion of the company. Some ingredients don't even have to be listed due to a loophole that protects the manufacturing secrets of companies. These companies self regulate. There is no external testing body.
- Skincare, hair care and body care products contain potential endocrine disruptors, which may be inhaled, ingested or absorbed into the skin. This can confuse the endocrine (hormone) system, leading to health problems. In particular thyroid, breast and lymphoma cancers have been linked to endocrine disruption.
- Mineral oil and petroleum make up a large component of conventional cosmetics. These are both non-renewable resources. Genetically modified organisms are often found in conventional cosmetic products commonly derived from maize or soy. Conventional cosmetics have a negative environmental impact.