



10 top ten tips



CHOOSING SAFER COSMETICS

From shampoo to lotion, from shaving cream to makeup, we apply cosmetic products every day to our skin, hair and nails. Many contain unknown or, worse, toxic ingredients.

Learn how to choose safer products for your family—and reduce the harmful chemicals in your bodies—with these top tips from Healthy Child Healthy World, powered by EWG.

1. KEEP IT SIMPLE

The average woman uses 12 personal care products every day, exposing herself to 168 different ingredients. Men aren't much better. (Good news: most kids use fewer.) Cut back on the number of products you buy and how often you use them. These simple habits will yield an immediate drop in chemical exposure—and your credit card bill.

2. KNOW WHAT YOU'RE BUYING

Learn as much as you can about a product before you purchase it. Read labels and pay attention to harmful ingredients such as parabens. Help is available: Check out EWG's tips on how to read a label and research more than 70,000 products in EWG's Skin Deep Cosmetics Database.

3. GO FRAGRANCE-FREE

Fragrances are complex mixtures of chemical ingredients, a leading cause of allergic skin reactions and a common asthma trigger. Some fragrance components can disrupt your hormones. Since the U.S. government doesn't require companies to disclose the ingredients that make up a product's fragrance, consumers never know what they're spraying or spreading on their bodies. It's best to go fragrance-free.

4. PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS

Young children are particularly susceptible to harm from chemical exposure. When buying products for your kids, avoid baby powder, and never choose an item that lists one of these on the label:

EWG'S TOP SIX CHEMICALS OF CONCERN FOR KIDS

- 2-Bromo-2-Nitropropane-1,3 Diol
- BHA
- Boric acid and sodium borate
- DMDM Hydantoin
- Oxybenzone
- Triclosan

5. IGNORE MARKETING LANGUAGE

The federal government ensures that product claims are accurate, right? Wrong. The Food and Drug Administration does not test ingredients for safety nor approve labels before products are sold. The words "natural," "safe," "gentle" or "green" on a label may mean very little. Always check the ingredients.

6. TALK TO YOUR TEENS

Not only do teenagers use more cosmetics—more than many adult women, according to surveys—during puberty, they're especially vulnerable to hormone disruption. Talk to your teens about how many products they're using and what's in them, go shopping together, and set a good example with your own cosmetics choices.

7. GET A GOOD SUNSCREEN

Shade and protective clothing provide the best protection from the sun, but a good sunscreen can help save you from serious sun damage. Look for active ingredients zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, with SPF 50 or lower; then apply whenever you go outside. Not only will you reduce your chance of skin cancer, down the line you could save a bundle in anti-aging, anti-wrinkle products—and their mix of chemicals. Read tips for kids in our Sun Safety Guide for Children.

8. PAMPER AT HOME

Toxic fumes and harmful chemicals often fill the confined spaces of nail salons. Buy your own products and opt for a mani/pedi at home instead. Look for polishes without formaldehyde, formalin, toluene and dibutyl phthalate (DBP), and leave your nails polish-free while pregnant.

9. DITCH THE ANTIBACTERIAL SOAP

Beat germs with plain soap and water. Antibacterial soaps contain harmful preservatives triclosan and triclocarban, which disrupt thyroid function, reproductive hormones and fetal development. And there isn't much evidence that they actually make you safer. Instead they can encourage the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, making all of us vulnerable to stronger disease-causing microbes. In search of a hand sanitizer? Pick an alcohol-based product with at least 60 percent alcohol.

10. EMBRACE YOUR NATURAL HAIR

Harsh products like chemical hair straighteners and permanent hair dyes contain harmful chemicals such as coal tar and formaldehyde. Learn to love your natural look—a safer alternative for body and mind.



Helping parents and caregivers make informed decisions to protect the health and development of our most precious resource—our children.
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