

Personal Care Products

We should all be picky about what we put on our body. Not just because we want beautiful skin or hair or nails, but because we want to live healthy vibrant lives. And personal care products that we keep in our homes and use on ourselves, play a role in that.

We didn't realize how much until we replaced them and then started helping others do the same. When we grow up using the same or similar products for years, it's hard to get an idea of how they're impacting our health. That's why removal is so key!

Everything from hair loss, skin rashes, migraines, and muscles aches to reproductive complications, diabetes and cancer have been linked to personal care products we use on a regular basis.

Our skin is our largest organ. And it absorbs a percentage of whatever chemicals we put on it. In the case of synthetic fragrance chemicals, like phthalates, it's 100%.

Even urine and umbilical cord blood of newborn babies show chemicals commonly found in personal care products. So clearly, our skin nor the placenta are barriers that keep these ingredients out of our systems. And our toxic load today is so high that our livers are unable to efficiently process the load and expel them out in our waste. Whatever is not metabolized or detoxified becomes part of our body burden and impacts our health.

So what we put on us, goes in us. And there's a lot that we put on us.

According to the Environmental Working Group, the average person is exposed to more than 126 chemicals before leaving their bathroom every morning.

The average woman uses 12 different personal care products every day, while the average man uses 6. When you think about all the different types of products, it's easy to see how it can quickly add up. Shampoo, conditioner, face wash, soaps, moisturizers, deodorant, hair spray, makeup, nail polish, perfume, cologne, aftershave, the list goes on.

And just like our laundry products follow us around 24/7, so does everything we put on our skin, hair and nails. We absorb it *and* inhale it.

Thankfully, most personal care products are required to provide an ingredient list. However, there are loopholes that unfortunately enable companies to get around listing the complete ingredient list. Furthermore, additional chemicals that aren't even ingredients in the formula are found to be emitted into the air due to chemical reactions.

There are thousands of chemicals available for personal care manufacturers to use with only a small minority having been tested for safety, and they're usually never tested to see how they interact when combined with other ingredients in a formula.

So as much as we want to believe that if something's sold on store shelves it must be safe, and also that just a little bit of an ingredient can't be that big of a deal - history and science tell us otherwise.

Numerous products originally marketed as safe have ended up in class-action lawsuits because enough people were harmed and even died. It's really important to wrap our minds around the fact that companies manufacturing these consumer products are self-regulated. It's up to the companies to test for safety and report any concerns to the FDA. And even if the FDA has proof that a product is in fact harmful, they still can't legally force the company to stop selling that product. They can only request that the company does a voluntary stop. We're in need of some serious legal reform. So in the meantime, our best bet to make companies manufacture safer products and to protect ourselves, is to be savvy consumers and only buy products we know are safe. The power of the purse! If we educate ourselves and stop buying products formulated with harmful ingredients, manufacturers will shift.

And the idea that "the dose makes the poison" - that something is harmful only if you're exposed to a large enough amount - is why we're often led to accept toxic chemicals being used in our everyday personal care products.

I know it seems like the ingredients listed at the end of an ingredient list, which indicates that only a small amount is present, can't possibly affect us - but they do.

And if low levels can cause issues, think about all the different products we use that contain many of the same chemicals. We're getting a cumulative effect where our bodies are overloaded and those low levels quickly turn into high levels because they're in everything!

We can avoid these though! We don't have to blindly trust marketing claims and be fooled into putting ourselves and our loved ones at risk! We can be the gatekeepers of what we bring into our homes and use on our bodies! We just have to realize and remember that even if we or a child seems like they're not sensitive or reactive, exposure in utero and in early years can go unrevealed until later in life. Or in more present ways you may not think to correlate. So taking preventative action is the best thing we can do!

If you find yourself still not convinced, check out the Hermosa study. It was designed to investigate chemical exposures from personal care and cosmetic products in a population of teenage girls. The purpose was to determine whether using personal care products free of phthalates, parabens, and other endocrine disruptors for 3 days could lower urinary concentrations. The study results were striking: Urinary concentrations of mono-ethyl phthalate decreased by 27% on average; methyl and propyl paraben concentrations decreased by 44 and

45%, respectively. Triclosan concentrations decreased by 36%, and BP-3 concentrations decreased by 36%.

This was in just 3 days!! These results show why our Toss the Toxins process is SO very powerful. Many of the chemicals we are exposed to everyday will actually start clearing from the body once we stop using them and are no longer exposed!!!

We recommend watching the HBO documentary “Not So Pretty” to help inspire you to toss these toxins in personal care products.

Let’s get rid of products with harmful ingredients!

Grab a few boxes. Then, starting with your bathrooms, gather all the personal care products you’re currently using as well as any stored in the backs of cabinets and drawers. Everything from colognes, deodorants, bath products, hair products, nail products, moisturizers, sunscreens, old half-used bottles, and samples of shampoos, soaps, conditioners, and lotions that you’ve collected from hotels over the years. Also, any razors that have gels or fragrances as part of the razor blade.

Remember, even if you don’t smell any strong scents, it doesn’t mean they’re not there. It’s just that your body has gotten used to it so the fragrances don’t smell strong to you anymore. Once you remove them, you’ll then be able to get a baseline again and smell how strong they likely really are.

You may want to go through your make-up separately or add it to the box with all the other products.

Move on to closets and any other areas you might keep personal care items, and add them to the box as well.

Once you’ve gathered everything, go through the box or boxes and sort into piles of “products to be tossed” and “products you want to put in a Sterilite box for later evaluation”.

You don’t have to be a chemist or have a scientific background to read labels and evaluate ingredients. You can vet products very quickly and feel confident about your decisions because one, there are some easy red flags to spot and two, we have some great tools at our fingertips.

You’re going to do a quick scan of the ingredient list of all products - so not just looking at the marketing claims but looking for the full ingredient list. You may have to put some items aside to look up the full ingredient list online since the list may not be on the item itself.

There are some common ingredient red flags that make it easy to determine which products are worth tossing.

“Fragrance” or “parfum” is a big one. And heads up that it’s in a lot of products, so it might feel like a big overhaul at first but it’s beyond worth it!

Essential oils that are not wildcrafted or organic is something else to look for. This is harder to swallow since it seems like essential oils would be completely natural, but unfortunately, testing has shown that less expensive non-organic essential oils processed with solvents have quite a harmful chemical array. So you want to toss those as well. Even some supposedly organic, non-toxic essential oils showed many chemicals not in the ingredient list. We recommend contacting the brand to ensure no solvents are used in the processing method if there’s a product you love.

Talc should always be avoided because of asbestos contamination which is toxic and carcinogenic.

Parabens are usually easy to identify by their name, such as methylparaben, propylparaben, butylparaben, or ethylparaben. Parabens are something you want to avoid.

Ideally, we want to have a period of time where all products with VOCs or fragrances of any kind are removed so the home is fragrance-free. Especially if there’s anyone in the home that has allergies, chronic illness, or is on any over the counter or prescription medication. If your entire family is healthy, then after a month you might try slowly introducing some of the products you have with wildcrafted or organic essential oils and see if you notice any reactions. We recommend you use essential oils with the help of an experienced professional. Essential oils are very concentrated and misuse can trigger inflammatory responses, can be neurotoxic to children, can impact hormone balance, cause seizures, etc.

Because we want to create a fragrance free home, we recommend products with wildcrafted or organic essential oils be placed in an airtight Sterilite container in a garage or outside area if possible. Again, just for a period so you can get to a baseline and be able to assess any potential reactions as you reintroduce them.

For the remaining products, watch our ‘how to easily assess cleaning & personal care products’.

Hopefully you have some products left, but if you don’t, if they all fall into the “products to toss” pile, pick out the ones you need to use on a regular basis and store in a small Sterilite box in your bathroom until you can get fragrance-free replacements. Store any products you’re not ready to get rid of but don’t need to use daily, in a container outside of the house. The main goal is to keep these products from being a source of 24/7 pollution.

The good news is that there are so many great companies making safe personal care products today. And there are some great DIY options too. It won’t be hard to find something you love, and now you know how to do your own search for safe products! We’ve also compiled a list of products we’ve tried and loved. You can find that in our additional resources section. And please share your favorite products with us so we can continue to add to our safe list!

Tossing personal care products you've used for years can feel like a big deal, but we promise you will not regret it!