

Should Your Hair Care Products Be “6-Free”?



Francesca Krempa · July 1, 2021



When it comes to clean beauty, no one is doing hair care quite like Briogeo. For one thing, Briogeo hair products are all “6-Free,” which means they don’t contain sulfates, silicones, phthalates, parabens, DEA, or artificial dyes—all considered by the cult-favorite brand to be harmful for hair, the planet, or both. Think Drunk Elephant’s “Suspicious 6”, but for hair.

“We have a saying at Briogeo: ‘When in doubt, leave it out,’” says Nancy Twine, Briogeo’s founder and CEO (not to mention the youngest Black woman to ever launch a line at Sephora). “If an ingredient seems suspect or potentially harmful to our hair, scalp health, or the environment, we consciously avoid using it in our products.”

Instead, Briogeo hair products all use 93 to 100 percent naturally derived, botanical ingredients, inspired by the organic formulas Twine and her mom used to whip up in their home kitchen using natural oils, butters, and plant-based ingredients from their local health-food store.

The “6-Free” ethos holds water: We know that lab-made chemicals can sometimes negatively affect our hair. For instance, while sulfates help give shampoo its lather and cleansing power, over time they can also strip strands of nourishing, natural oils and proteins, leaving them damaged and dry. And although silicones are used to protect hair from heat damage and prevent frizz, they can build up and block hair fibers from absorbing key vitamins and healthy hydration. But do our hair products need to be “6-Free”? Are there any chemicals that can actually do our hair some good?

To find out whether we should be seeking out 6-free hair care, I tapped cosmetic chemist Ginger King. While she's pro-clean beauty across the board, there are some chemical compounds that she believes aren't necessarily as damaging as others. Take silicones, for example. Yes, they can create build-up. However, King points out that there's a reason they're so commonly used in hair-care products—they're more effective at giving hair slip than any natural alternative. Parabens, which are preservatives, are controversial, too. "In science, there is nothing wrong with this material," King says. "However, I am also a consumer. If there are any studies showing there is a potential that this material is carcinogenic, I'm not taking a chance."

Briogeo Mango + Cherry Superfoods Hair Pack



BRIOGEO

Superfoods Mango + Cherry
Balancing Shampoo +
Conditioner Duo for Oil
Control

\$49.00

QUICK VIEW

Even Twine acknowledges that not *all* synthetic ingredients are bad, nor are all natural ingredients automatically good. "We're very thorough in our research when we are vetting both clean and synthetic ingredients for our products," she says. "For example, because we use such a high percentage of naturally derived ingredients in our formulas, we also include a synthetic but safe Ecocert preservative to help stabilize and extend the shelf life of our products in the shower."

While it all comes down to personal preference, King believes that making the switch to clean beauty is worth it—6-free hair care included. Not only are there a *ton* of efficacious products that can do wonders for both hair and scalp, but when it comes to chemicals in general, you can't go wrong by erring on the side of caution.

“We don't know long-term cumulative effects of an ingredient or the effect [of it] when it's in the formulated product,” says King. “If we can use clean products, it's a safety net.”

The best thing you can do is educate yourself before you buy. Look for brands like Briogeo that are transparent about their product development methodology, rather than those that use unregulated terms like “clean” and “natural” without the intel to back them up.

When they come from a credible brand, terms like “6-Free” can help reassure you that your products are clear of potentially questionable ingredients, without having to memorize a list of the most common offenders before you shop. After all, says Twine, “certain ingredients like silicones come in many different forms and may pop-up on an ingredient list without you realizing it.”

So there you have it: “6-Free” isn't just a buzzy marketing phrase for Briogeo hair products, but a helpful time-saver, too.