



Protecting Our Health and Environment

ReNews

YOUR NEWS AND INFORMATION SOURCE ABOUT • RECYCLING • POLLUTION PREVENTION • LESS TOXIC PRODUCTS

Fall 2005

Uncovering the Beast Behind Beauty Products: Are They Safe?



How to read labels

Since the FDA has no regulatory authority over cosmetics, many label claims do not have any regulatory or legal basis. You can get information about label claims such as cruelty free, allergy tested, and dermatologist tested at www.eco-labels.org, a website run by Consumers Union, publisher of *Consumer Reports* magazine. The Environmental Working Group "Skin Deep" report ewg.org/reports/skindeep will help you evaluate your personal care products' safety. Senate Bill (SB) 484, the California Safe Cosmetics Act, is currently in the State legislature. Go to www.safecosmetics.org to learn more about it and get involved.

Like Ponce de Leon the 15th century explorer, we are searching for the fountain of youth. Youth is worshiped and highly sought after in our culture and cosmetic and personal care product marketers use it as a sales strategy. Their lotions and potions promise "age defying" or "smooth glowing" skin. Their marketing claims promise us a life free of worries and stress with products marketed as "mini spa treatments" and product names riddled with words like, pleasure, exotic, and escape. Wouldn't it be nice if results were attainable by spending a few bucks? When you read on and learn more about personal care products, you might think twice before believing these claims. This article will give you some tools to make informed decisions about the products you use on your skin and body.

Who is looking out for us?

The common assumption among consumers is that companies would not knowingly include harmful ingredients in the products they put on the market. Unfortunately not all ingredients in products are researched thoroughly. The Food and Drug Agency (FDA) oversees the industry, however they have no regulatory authority over cosmetics. Cosmetic products and ingredients **are not** subject to FDA premarket approval authority, with the exception of color additives.¹

Who regulates the cosmetics industry?

The cosmetics industry is self-regulated by the Cosmetic Ingredient Review (CIR) panel. Testing of products is voluntary and controlled by the manufacturers; many ingredients in cosmetics products are not safety tested at all. This regulatory structure gives cosmetic companies the freedom to select ingredients, while it transfers potential health risks to the users of the products. The cosmetics industry is a \$35 billion dollar business. Companies want to offer goods

in this lucrative market, and they often market products that are poorly studied, or sometimes known to pose serious health effects. An astonishing one-third of all products contain one or more ingredients classified as *possible* human carcinogens.²

Those factors considered, consumers ought to take responsibility for the products they choose to use, and to support companies that are concerned about their product's effect on human health and the environment. Recent reports showing high levels of industrial chemicals in umbilical cord blood and newborns are one indication that we should start to question the safety of the products we use both on our bodies and around the house. The report may not be cause for alarm, but an indication that everything in our environment, not just alcohol and cigarette smoke can affect the extremely sensitive placenta and fragile infants. Industry leader's response to these reports was "chemicals found in umbilical blood are not an indication of a risk to health". The statement is true, as there is no proof that these chemicals have caused damage, but if we look at recent history with the increase of diseases linked to synthetic chemicals, perhaps we should take a precautionary approach or demand more research.

Think about this!

The average adult uses 9 personal care products each day, with 126 unique chemical ingredients. More than a quarter of all women and one of every 100 men use at

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

In this issue...

- 🔗 Uncovering the Beast Behind Beauty Products
- 🔗 Don't Throw Away That Hazard!
- 🔗 Safe Cleaning Solutions
- 🔗 Recycling Locations

Don't Throw Away That Hazard!

Many of the items we use in our everyday life are considered hazardous when it is time to dispose of them. If thrown in the garbage these items have the potential to harm garbage collectors, residents, and the environment by polluting our water and soils. You should never throw any of the following into the garbage. These items are hazardous but they can be recycled.

Batteries: Many batteries contain heavy metals such as lead and cadmium that can pollute ground water if not properly disposed.

Fluorescent lamps: All fluorescent lamps and tubes contain mercury. If placed in the trash the lamps will break and mercury is released into the environment. Mercury vapors can be absorbed through the lungs into the bloodstream affecting your health.

Electronics: Computers and TVs contain many hazardous constituents from lead in cathode ray monitors, chlorinated plastics in cable wiring, brominated flame retardants in circuit boards to mercury in LCD displays. Improper management or disposal of these and other electronic equipment (cell phones, fax machines, printers, and others) can pose a significant threat to public health and the environment.

For proper Electronics disposal:

Goodwill stores in San Mateo County are now accepting computers and components (keyboard, mouse, CPU), laptops, TVs under 27", and cell phones in any condition, for refurbishing and recycling



through the new ReCompute program. Other types of electronics must be working to be accepted.

Residents can drop off items at any Goodwill Donation Center. Businesses with more than 20 units should call Goodwill at 415-575-2150 to schedule a free pickup. Business with less than 20 units can either pay \$25 for a pickup or drop items off for free at a donation center. Items will be data cleansed to Department of Defense standards.

Safeway - Belmont • 2100 Ralston Avenue
Donation Center - Burlingame • 1215 California Drive
Safeway - Menlo Park • 625 El Camino Real
SamTrans - Pacifica • 575 Linda Mar Boulevard
NEW! Donation Center - San Carlos • 550 Quarry Road

Donation Center - San Mateo • 28 West 25th Avenue

Donation Center - South SF • 1015 El Camino Real

Pak & Save - South SF • 2255 Gellert Boulevard

For proper disposal of other household hazardous waste:

Refer to the back of this newsletter (page 4) for locations to drop off household batteries and fluorescent tubes; as well as motor oil, oil filters, antifreeze, car batteries, and latex paint.

To dispose of other household chemicals please call (650) 363-4718 or visit www.smhealth.org/bhw to make an appointment.

Uncovering the Beast Behind Beauty Products: Are They Safe?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

least 15 products daily. Little research is available to document the safety or health risks of low-dose repeated exposures to chemical mixtures like those in personal care products, but the absence of data should never be mistaken as proof of safety. The chemicals in any one consumer product alone are unlikely to cause harm, but we are repeatedly exposed to industrial chemicals from many different sources on a daily basis. The more that science tells us about the effects of low dose exposures, from the subtle and reversible to effects that are serious and permanent, the more we understand that low doses can be harmful.³

We also are exposed to so many more chemicals today than in the past. Many of these chemicals have found their way into our bodies, our breast milk and our children. Diseases linked to synthetic chemicals, including breast cancer, testicular cancer and reproductive problems, are on the rise. Even plant-based products, which are generally in the untested category along with many synthetic chemicals, may have pesticide residues that will end up in small quantities in the product. Ingestion and absorption are two of the quickest ways into the body, and up to 70% of what is applied to the skin can be absorbed into the body, so it is as important to think

about the contents of personal care products, as it is the food we are eating.

What can you do?

Take charge of your health and make informed choices. Body burden and personal care products are hot topics in the news and there are numerous resources for consumers who want to make better choices. The non-profit group Safe Cosmetics www.safecosmetics.org, a collaborative of many non-profits including the Breast Cancer Fund, has established a "campaign for safe cosmetics" and has posted a list of 150 companies on their website that have pledged to make safe products.

The Environmental Working Group www.ewg.org, is a group that reviews scientific studies and performs laboratory tests to expose threats to human health and the environment. Their recent studies include "Skin Deep, a safety assessment of ingredients in personal care products" and "Body Burden, the pollution in newborns". The Skin Deep report lists over 7,500 personal care products, and assesses their ingredients for the following: cancer, pregnancy concerns, safety violations, penetration enhancers, unassessed ingredients, harmful impurities, and allergies.

1. FDA website <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/cos-206.html>

2. Environmental Working Group, Skin Deep Report http://www.ewg.org/reports/skindeep/report/executive_summary.php

3. Environmental Working Group http://www.ewg.org/reports/skindeep/report/q_and_a.php



ALTERNATIVES CORNER

Safer Cleaning Solutions

The product choices for cleaning your home or apartment are many. Walking through the cleaning product aisle of any supermarket, you find a dizzying array of items for cleaning just about everything. Before you toss another item into your cart be aware that using some of these products may do more harm than good. Though commercial cleaners are effective at cleaning dirt and stains, many can be hazardous to your health. You know this if you've ever read the labels: "Harmful or fatal if swallowed", "Use only in well-ventilated areas."

Warnings like these are so common, you may not take them seriously, but you should:

- The American Association of Poison Control Centers lists cleaning products that cause burns (drain openers, toilet bowl cleaners, oven cleaners, and rust removers) as one of the most dangerous poisons involved in unintentional poisonings.¹
- Cleaning products also turn out to be the leading sources of toxic air pollution in household operations, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists.² An article published in the LA Times

Cleaning products are some of the most dangerous poisons.

March 9, 2003 discussed how in Southern California, unregulated household products are the second leading source of air pollution after auto tail pipe emissions, emitting 108 tons of hydrocarbons daily.

- Commercial cleaners may also harm the environment when produced, rinsed down the drain or disposed of improperly.

When choosing a household cleaner, select wisely by reading the ingredients list, and any safety precautions on the label. Keep in mind that ingredients are not always listed on cleaning products and that there are no legal standards to define environmental or safety claims that are printed on the label. Some of the ingredients found in commercial cleaning products that are potentially hazardous include: phosphates (found in some soaps and detergents, which cause algae blooms that suffocate fish), chlorine-based compounds (which can form harmful organochlorines, including some that may cause cancer), silica-based products (that can cause cancer when inhaled), petroleum-based surfactants (which are slow to break down in the environment and contain impurities that contaminate air and water), and glycol ethers (which are central nervous system depressants and kidney and liver poisons).³ A safer solution to commercial cleaners is to make your own homemade clean-

ers with common ingredients like vinegar, baking soda, borax, and vegetable based liquid soaps.

Try these recipes for common cleanups

All-Purpose Cleaner: Mix in spray bottle—1-quart warm water, 1-teaspoon mild liquid dishwashing soap, 1-teaspoon borax, and a squeeze of lemon or splash of vinegar. Use for cleaning countertops, floors, walls, carpets, and upholstery.

Oven Cleaner: Mix 2-tablespoons liquid soap, 2-teaspoons borax, and 1-quart of warm water; leave on oven for 20 minutes then scrub with a non-chlorinated scouring powder.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner: Scrub with a solution of 1/2-cup borax in 1-gallon water for cleaning and disinfecting.

Scouring Powders: Mix 3 parts baking soda and 1 part borax. For lighter jobs, try baking soda or salt alone.

Tub/Tile Cleaner: To clean grout, combine 3-cups of baking soda and 1-cup warm water and scrub into the grout; rinse well with water.

Drain Opener: Use a plunger followed by a 1/2 cup of baking soda and 1/2cup of vinegar; cover drain and let sit for 15 minutes; rinse with 2-quarts of boiling water.

Glass Cleaner: Mix 4 tablespoons of lemon juice in 1 gallon of water.

If you hire a housecleaner, don't hesitate to ask what products they use, and let them know your preferences for these safer cleaning methods. There are some housecleaners and companies that now specialize in eco-cleaning; check www.wagescooperatives.org for information on finding one.

Contact the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program to dispose of unused cleaning supplies and other chemicals properly
(650) 363-4718,
www.smhealth.org/hhw



¹ "Preventing Poisonings in the Home" American Association of Poison Control Centers www.aapcc.org/ppwbrochure.htm

² Michael Brower PH.D. and Warren Leon PH.D., "The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices: Practical Advice From the Union of Concerned Scientists" p 67, Three Rivers Press, NY 1999.

³ "Alternatives to household chemicals" www.greenconsumer.cc

Recycle your used motor oil, oil filters, antifreeze, car batteries, latex paint, fluorescent lamps¹, and household batteries!²

San Mateo County has compiled this list as a reference. If you have any questions about proper disposal of other household chemicals, please call 650-363-4305. To dispose of other household waste at a collection event call 363-4718 or visit smhealth.org/hhw to make an appointment.

Site	Address	Phone	Automotive				Household			
Belmont										
Carlmont Village Shell	2000 Ralston Ave.	592-3637		B	O		T			
Burlingame										
Burlingame City Hall	501 Primrose Rd.	558-7200						H		
Burlingame Texaco	601 California Dr.	347-0486			O	F				
Curries Chevron	260 El Camino Real	344-6120			O					
Daly City										
Bayshore Chevron	2690 Bayshore Blvd.	415-330-9888		B	O					
BFI	1680 Edgeworth Ave.	756-1130						H		C
BFI Mussel Rock T.S.	Westline & Skyline Dr.	755-7068	A		O	F				
Firestone Store	4 Serramonte Center	994-1500	A	B	O	F	T			
Kragen Auto Parts	5 Skyline Plaza	994-2650		B	O	F				
Kragen Auto Parts	7283 Mission St.	755-8890		B	O					
Speedee Oil Change	1600 Sulivan Ave.	755-8777			O					
East Palo Alto										
EPA Corp yard	150 Tara Street	853-5916			O	F				
Foster City										
AM/PM Hillsdale Arco	880 E. Hillsdale Blvd	349-1849			O					
Valero	501 Foster City Blvd	345-6500			O	F				
Half Moon Bay										
Ocean Shore Hardware	111 Main St.	726-5505						L	P	
Ox Mountain Landfill	12310 Highway 92	726-1819	A	B	O	F	T			C
Menlo Park										
Anderson Chevrolet	300 El Camino Real	321-4280			O					
Belle Haven Child Devel Cntr	410 Ivy Drive	330-2270						H		
Fred Wedges Chevron	100 Middlefield Rd.	328-5349		B	O	F	T			
M&R Automotive	1281 El Camino Real	325-3900			O	F				
Menlo Park Library	801 Alma St.	330-2500						H		
Oil Changer	944 Willow Rd.	321-9047			O	F				
Onetta Harris Comm Cntr	100 Terminal Ave.	330-2250						H		
Sharon Heights Shell	125 Sharon Park Dr.	854-3400			O	F				
Millbrae										
Firestone Store	1201 El Camino Real	871-9096			O		T			
Kragen Auto Parts	1145 El Camino Real	583-0443			O	F				
Millbrae Library	1 Library Ave.	697-7607						H		
Millbrae Square Chevron	501 El Camino Real	697-3275	A	B	O	F	T			
Speedee Oil Change	390 El Camino Real	692-6740			O					
Pacific										
Coastside Scavenger	1046 Palmetto Ave.	355-9000	A	B	O	F	T	H	L	P
Oil Changer	2880 Skyline Blvd.	355-7233			O					
Sanford Firestone	705 Hickey Blvd.	355-1154		B	O	F	T			
Pescadero										
BFI Waste Systems	Bean Hollow Rd.	879-0729		B	O	F	T			
Portola Valley										
Ladera Autoworks	104 La Mesa Dr.	854-4504			O	F				

AUTOMOTIVE

A antifreeze
O used motor oil
T tires (fee)

B car batteries
F oil filters

HOUSEHOLD

H household batteries
P latex paint

L fluorescent lamps
C computers, TVs (fee)

Oil and oil filters are accepted free of charge at all locations. State Certified Collection Centers will pay 16 cents per gallon for used oil upon request. A fee may apply for antifreeze, tires, and batteries. Call before visiting collection centers. Used oil and antifreeze must not be mixed with any other automotive products. No broken batteries can be accepted. Do not leave your oil at an unattended station.

Site	Address	Phone	Automotive				Household			
Redwood City										
Broadway Automotive	1603 Broadway	839-2886			O	F				
Chanique's Auto Repair	425 Dumbarton St	365-1322		B	O	F				
County Government Cntr	455 County Cntr, 1st Flr	363-4957						H		
Firestone Store	1458 El Camino Real	364-1900	A	B	O	F	T			
Public Works Grant Yard	752 Chestnut Street	363-4147	A	B	O	F				
Jiffy Lube	640 Whipple Ave.	369-8067			O	F				
Kings Union 76	975 Woodside Rd	364-9620	A	B	O	F	T			
Kragen Auto Parts	2411 El Camino Real	368-2831		B	O	F				
Oil Changer	2762 El Camino Real	366-5394			O	F				
Performance Source	2401 Spring Street	366-2133		B	O	F				
Roosevelt Shell	2108 Roosevelt Ave	366-1886			O	F	T			
Veterans Blvd Shell	690 Veterans Blvd	369-6675			O	F				
San Bruno										
Jiffy Lube	1580 El Camino Real	588-3970			O	F				
San Bruno Garbage Co.	101 Tanforan Ave	583-8536	A	B	O	F	H	L	P	C
Skyline College	3300 College Dr	738-4126			O	F				
Speedee Oil Change	801 El Camino Real	952-5178			O	F				
San Carlos										
BFI Recyclery	333 Shoreway Rd	637-1411	A		O	F	T	H	L	P
Jiffy Lube	1030 El Camino Real	594-1688			O	F				
Kragen Auto Parts	1272 El Camino Real	595-5112		B	O	F				
Oil Changer	1188 El Camino Real	591-0695			O	F				
Pep Boys	1087 Old County Road	632-1522			O	F				
Perfect Lube	1792 El Camino Real	593-4223			O	F				
Quality Tune Up	400 El Camino Real	593-7873			O	F				
San Mateo										
Auto Zone	3880 S. El Camino Real	372-0535		B	O					
Chevron Oil Stop	2009 El Camino Real	572-8000			O					
Firestone Store	2180 S. El Camino Real	345-3535			O	F				
Jiffy Lube	2517 S. El Camino Real	349-7222			O	F				
Jiffy Lube	407 S Delaware St	344-8242			O	F				
Kragen Auto Parts	2640 S. El Camino Real	349-1275		B	O	F				
Kragen Auto Parts	400 S Norfolk St.	344-2448			O					
Pride Paint	911 S. Railroad	347-2163								P
Reeds Service Center	1641 Palm Ave	341-6675	A	B	O	F				
San Mateo Auto Care	1471 E Third St.	343-6651			O					
San Mateo City Hall	330 W. 20th Ave.	522-7346						H		
So. San Francisco										
BlueLine Transfer	500 E. Jamie Ct	589-5511	A	B	O	F	T	H	L	P
Early American Paint	476 Victory Ave.	583-9055								P
Firestone Store	190 El Camino Real	583-2848	A	B	O	F	T			
First Automotive Distrib.	273 E. Harris Ave.	333-8871			O					
Kragen Auto Parts	1059 El Camino Real	589-8102		B	O	F				
Kragen Auto Parts	3541 Callan Blvd.	827-9081			O	F				
Meehan Battery	1139 Airport Blvd.	583-6735		B						
Shiva Auto Repair	118 S. Spruce Ave.	225-0600		B	O	F				
Woodside										
Skylonda Fire Station	17290 Skyline Blvd	851-1860			O	F		H		

1. Both fluorescent tubes and compact fluorescents are recyclable.
2. Alkaline, NiCd, Li, NiMH