

ecoliving

● HEALTH & BEAUTY

The chemical cover-up

We know that products containing natural ingredients are better for us, but do we know why? When it comes to the beauty industry, being a responsible consumer means caring about yourself, your family and the planet enough to look beyond the labels.

When choosing the products to put in your bathroom, the safest approach is to include only those with ingredients that you would have your skin 'eat.' After all, this is effectively what happens to over half of it. The rest is washed off, down the plug-hole to find its way back into the earth's eco systems.

With the legislation on product labelling so inexplicably lax (perfume still has no requirement whatsoever for ingredient listings), the onus falls to us, as responsible consumers, to look for the truth behind the label. The fact is, the majority of the cosmetic industry's marketing on labels is enormously misleading (The Body Shop's Anita Roddick went so far as to call it "a scandalous lie"). Therefore, we must do the hard work ourselves and solve the labelling mysteries.

It is estimated that 5,000 to 10,000 chemicals are considered hazardous, of which 150-200 may cause cancer. But this is no reason to give up. Being natural and safe is not synonymous with the grubby, style-bypassed, hippy eco-warrior that it once was. Times are changing and the market reflects this. You can buy alternatives and stay beautiful – and healthy – if you just know what to look for.

Here, we give you an overview of what to avoid, but remember, there is a wealth of conflicting evidence in this field and much of the research is in its early stages. Use this as a starting point and rise to the challenge of looking beyond the label.

So help stop the chemical cover-up and save your body and the planet in the process. Now that's a winning combination!

CONSIDER THE FACTS

60% of what you put on your skin can be absorbed into your bloodstream.

The term natural can be used on beauty packaging when only 1% of its contents are naturally derived.

A terrifying combination isn't it?

Sodium Lauryl Sulphate

SLS is a detergent used as an emulsifying and foaming agent to make bubbles in a huge variety of commonly used products, including shampoos, soaps, face and body washes and toothpastes. Research indicates that SLS can cause skin, eye and respiratory tract irritation as well as damage to the liver, lungs and immune system. Furthermore, when used in combination with other personal care products, SLS has the potential to react with their ingredients to form nitrosamines, which are another known carcinogen. Some research has indicated that a solution of just 2% SLS can increase skin thickness and cause irritation and inflammation, which should trigger a red flag of caution since some shampoos contain more than 50% SLS.

Look on the label for... sodium lauryl sulphate. There are many derivatives of SLS that can be found in commercial preparations, including sodium laureth sulphate, sodium laureth-3 sulphate, and DEA or TEA sodium lauryl sulphate.

Instead try: Pai

