



## *Natural Personal Care*

Keeping baby clean is an important part of keeping her healthy. Unfortunately, many of the washes and other personal care products out there have chemicals in them that are anything but healthy for your little one. Keep bath time safe and fun by using natural and organic personal care products for yourself and your baby. We think that the smell of a newborn baby is better than any added fragrance anyway!

### **What you should know:**

Skin absorbs up to 60% of what's put on it, and many of the chemicals then get into the bloodstream.<sup>1</sup> Babies' bodies are developing for years, so for them this is even more significant, as every drop of product that touches their bodies is proportionally greater than the same drop on our own. Traditional personal care products are full of chemicals that we would rather not have in our bloodstreams, including carcinogens and hormone disruptors, chemicals that are not regulated by any government agency. Though many of these ingredients have been deemed harmless in small doses, the cumulative effects of many different products over time have not yet been tested. Use natural and organic personal care products for yourself and your baby in order to avoid these synthetic chemicals.

Synthetic chemicals in personal care items, used for preservatives, color, fragrance, and suds, do not need to be tested or monitored for long-term health effects. The FDA has no authority to regulate personal hygiene products or their ingredients before their release.

### **Ingredients to avoid include:**

**Coal tar colors** - a known carcinogen, may be included in the coloring in some baby soaps, shampoos, and bath products.

**Diethanolamine (DEA)** - found in shampoos. It is suspected to be a carcinogen and is particularly dangerous to brain development in fetuses. It may be seen on a label as lauryl diethanolamide, coco diethanolamide, or something similar.<sup>2</sup>

**1,4-Dioxane** - makes bubble bath and shampoo foam. According to the EPA, in high doses, it is a probable human carcinogen, a known eye and respiratory tract irritant, and is suspected of causing damage to the nervous system, liver, and kidneys.

**Preservative DMDM hydantoin** - an allergen and irritant found in shampoo and sunscreen.<sup>3</sup>

**Fragrance** - Many fake scents are made from petrochemicals and give off VOCs (can cause cancer, liver damage.)<sup>1</sup> Many also contain phthalates (see below).

**Formaldehyde** - may appear as formalin on a label, used as a preservative. In high exposures formaldehyde has been shown to cause cancer in animals. It is also a respiratory irritant and high concentrations may trigger attacks in people with asthma.

**Glycol** - used in cosmetics, lotions, creams, and hand-wipes. It has caused liver and kidney abnormalities and birth defects in animals. It has been linked to respiratory irritation, dermatitis and brain damage.

**Nitrates and sulfur compounds** - used in shampoos, these can react with other products to form carcinogenic nitrates and dioxin, which can be retained in the body for years.

**Oxybenzone** - found in sunscreens, can produce allergy and cancer causing chemicals when combined with sunlight.

**Parabens (methyl-, propyl-, butyl-, ethyl-, isobutyl)** - used to give products a longer shelf life. Banned in Europe, these are the most widely used cosmetic preservatives in the U.S. There is evidence they mimic estrogen and are therefore endocrine disrupters.

Recently, a study from Brunel University in England linked parabens to the possibility that male babies exposed in utero could have lower sperm counts. A 2004 British study in the Journal of Applied Toxicology linked parabens to breast cancer by finding parabens in breast cancer cells.<sup>1</sup> Parabens have been linked to cancer in lab animals and have caused fish and frogs to change sex from male to female. Some studies have indicated that parabens may be associated with carcinogenic and weak estrogenic activity that could lead to tumors and cancer.<sup>2</sup>

**Phthalates** - used in beauty products and to make plastic more flexible. They can be found as ingredients in sunscreens, moisturizers, shampoos, conditioners, and nail products. Some names include DBP (di-n-butyl phthalate) and DEP (diethyl phthalate). Phthalates are also used as a fixative in fragrances and, as such, are not required to be listed on labels. Phthalates, which mimic estrogen, are banned from cosmetics in Europe.

Phthalates have been proven to interfere with hormonal and reproductive functions in animals and in one study linked to reproductive abnormalities in boys exposed to high levels in utero.<sup>1,2</sup> A 2000 study by the CDC found that 75% of Americans tested had traces of phthalates in their urine.

**Quarternium 15** - is a preservative that is a form of formaldehyde. It may cause irritation and weaken the immune system.

**Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS)** - creates suds. This is in most conventional shampoos and conditioners. It can cause skin and eye irritation, allergic reactions, and damage to the immune system. It makes the skin more permeable and worried to interact with other products to form carcinogens.<sup>1</sup>

**Talc** - chemical grade talcum powder has been found to be a carcinogen with a link to ovarian cancer. Talc particles are similar to asbestos particles and some data suggests it can cause cancer in the lungs of lab animals.

**Toluene** - similar to benzene, it can cause liver damage if ingested.

**Triclosan** - is found in most anti-bacterial hand cleaners and soaps. It is a suspected endocrine disruptor and can lead to resistant bacteria. When triclosan is mixed with water and exposed to sunlight, it can form dioxin.<sup>4</sup> There is a fear that triclosan is contaminated with dioxins. According to the EPA, dioxin is a likely carcinogen.<sup>5</sup> The American Medical Association says, “Despite their recent proliferation in consumer products, the use of antimicrobial agents such as triclosan in consumer products has not been studied extensively. No data exist to support their efficacy when used in such products or any need for them...it may be prudent to avoid the use of antimicrobial agents in consumer products...”<sup>4</sup>

For example, a study of over 200 healthy households found that those households that used antibacterial products did not have any reduced risk for symptoms of viral infectious diseases.<sup>4</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that

antibacterial soaps are not necessary in everyday use, and washing hands with ordinary soap and warm water is an effective way to ward off infections. Because products claim to keep working for hours after use, we know that triclosan stays on the skin. We also know that it is absorbed in the blood because of triclosan found in 3 out of 5 human breast milk samples during a 2002 study in Chemosphere in Sweden.

### Resources:

- <sup>1</sup> Healthy Child, Healthy World. pg. 102-111.
- <sup>2</sup> Greene, Dr. Alan M.D., Raising Baby Green. pg. 172-175.
- <sup>3</sup> Barnett, Sloan, Green Goes with Everything, pgs. 127-132
- <sup>4</sup> Beyondpesticides.org
- <sup>5</sup> <http://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/CFM/nceaQFind.cfm?keyword=Dioxin>