



WHAT DO SHAMPOO AND MASCARA HAVE TO DO WITH THE ENVIRONMENT?

We have become increasingly cautious about the health risks posed by harmful substances found in pesticides, food additives, and air pollution, but what about the shampoo, soap, body lotion, lip balm, deodorant, and makeup we use on our bodies? We are in close, everyday contact with chemicals in personal care products, yet many of us do not consider the long-term impact they might have on our health.

Most people use some combination of toothpaste, hair conditioner, sunscreen, and cosmetics without a second thought ... applying an average of 126 unique ingredients on their skin every day. These chemicals, whether they are absorbed through the skin, inhaled, ingested (think lip gloss!) or rinsed down the drain, may be cause for concern for human health and for the impact they may have to wildlife, rivers and streams.

Industrial chemicals are basic ingredients in personal care products. For example, phthalates are often used to extend the life of chemical fragrances. Parabens are petroleum-derived preservatives that are regularly used by the cosmetics industry.

To learn about the safety of ingredients in personal care products go to www.cosmeticdatabase.com for exhaustive information on hundreds of personal care products and a list of “What Not to Buy.” The website also includes more than 200 manufacturers who have signed the *Compact for Safe Cosmetics*, a nonbinding pledge to eliminate the use of ingredients known or suspected of causing cancer, mutations or birth defects within three years.

Bottomline, the advice to follow is “the simpler the better.” Fewer synthetic ingredients, fewer ingredients overall and, if possible, fewer products altogether.